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VOLUME XXXVII

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VOLTAIRE

ESSAYS

ON

LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY, ART, HISTORY

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ESSAYS

ON

LITERATURE: PHILOSOPHY: ART: HISTORY.

VOLTAIRE'S SPEECH

ON HIS RECEPTION INTO THE FRENCH ACADEMY, WITH NOTES.

Delivered on May 9, 1746.

GENTLEMEN:

Your founder transfused into your establishment all the greatness and dignity of his own soul, by ordaining that you should always be free and equal. And indeed he acted wisely in raising above dependence those who were above all selfish and interested views, and who, as generous as himself, did letters the honor which they so well deserve, namely, that of studying them for their own sake.[1] It was

[1] The French Academy is the oldest establishment of that kind in France. It was at first composed of some men of letters, who met together for the sake of mutual conversation. It is not divided into honorary and pensionary members. Its privileges are merely honorary, such as that enjoyed by the commensals of the palace, of not being

to be feared that the ardor of prosecuting these noble studies might one day be relaxed. In order, therefore, to preserve it in its full vigor, you made a law, by which you bound yourselves to admit none as members of your academy but such as resided in Paris. From this law, however, you have wisely deviated in receiving in your number those extraordinary geniuses who were called elsewhere by their honorable employments, but who by their sensible or sublime performances were always present with you; for it would be to violate the spirit of a law not to transgress the letter of it in favor of great men. If the late president Bouhier, after having flattered himself with the pleasing hopes of consecrating the rest of his days to your company, was obliged to pass them at a considerable distance, both he and the academy were comforted for their mutual loss, by reflecting that he cultivated your sciences with his usual industry in the city of Dijon, which has produced so many great men,[1] and where genius seems to be one of the characteristics of the citizens.

He put us in mind of those times when the most austere magistrates, accomplished like him in the knowledge of the laws, unbent their minds from the cares of state, by indulging in the amusements of literature. What pitiful wretches are those who

obliged to plead out of Paris; that of addressing the king in a body with the superior courts; and that of being accountable to none but the king.

[1] Messieurs de la Monnoye, Bouhier, Lantin, and above all, the eloquent Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, who is commonly considered as the last father of the church.

despise these agreeable studies; who place a kind of solitary grandeur in shutting themselves up within the narrow circle of their own employments! Do they not know that Cicero, after having filled the first place in the world, still continued to plead the causes of his fellow-citizens, wrote on the nature of the gods, conversed with men of letters, went to the theatre, condescended to cultivate the friendship of Æsopus and Roscius, and left little minds to enjoy their solemn gravity, which is only the mask of ignorance and weakness?

The president Bouhier was a man of great learning; but did not resemble those useless and unsociable scholars, who neglect the study of their own tongue to acquire an imperfect knowledge of ancient languages; who think they have a right to despise their own times, because they imagine they have some little acquaintance with former ages; who admire a passage in Æschylus, but have never enjoyed the pleasure of shedding a tear at our own plays. He translated Petronius's poem on the civil war; not that he considered that declamation (which is full of false thoughts) as nearly equal to the chaste and elegant sublimity of Virgil: on the contrary, he knew that Petronius's satire,[1] though dis-

[1] Saint-Évremond admires Petronius, because he takes him for a great courtier, and believed himself to be such. This was the folly of the times. Saint-Évremond and several others assert that Nero is represented under the name of Trimalchion: but can an old, fat, and ridiculous farmer of the revenues, and his old wife, an impertinent citizen, be said to resemble a young emperor and his young spouse, Octavia, or the young Poppæa? Can the debaucheries and

tinguished here and there by charming strokes of wit, is no more than the whimsical production of a young man of mean condition, whose manners and style were alike irregular. Some men who pretend to be the most perfect masters of taste and pleasure, esteem the whole of Petronius's works; but M. Bouhier, a man of greater judgment, does not even esteem all that he translated. It is one proof, among many others, how much reason has been improved in the present age, that a translator is no longer a blind admirer of his author; but can treat him with the same impartiality as he would grant a contemporary. He exercised his talents on this poem, on the "Hymn to Venus," and on Anacreon, in order to show that the poets ought to be translated into verse, an opinion which he defended with great warmth; nor will it be thought strange that my sentiments are the same as his.

Allow me, gentlemen, to enter a little more deeply into these literary discussions; my doubts before such learned judges as you will be equal to decisions. In this manner I may possibly contribute to the improvement of the arts; and I had much rather deliver in your presence a useful than an eloquent discourse.

Why is it that Homer, Theocritus, Lucretius, Virgil, and Horace have been happily translated into

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petty thefts of a few roguish scholars be said to resemble the pleasures of the master of the world? Petronius, the author of the satire, is evidently a young man of spirit, who made a figure among a set of obscure debauchees, and not the consul Petronius.

Italian and English?[1] Why is it that these nations have none of the ancient poets in prose, and that we have none of them in verse? I will endeavor to assign the reason.

To surmount the difficulties that oppose us in the execution of any work constitutes no inconsiderable part of its merits. No great achievements without great labor; nor is there a nation in the world where it is more difficult to transfuse the true spirit of ancient poetry than it is in ours. The first poets formed the genius of their language. The Greeks and the Romans at first employed poetry in depicting all the sensible objects of nature. Homer describes whatever strikes the eye. The French, who have not yet begun to improve any of the more sublime kinds of poetry except the dramatic, neither could nor should describe anything that does not affect the soul. We have insensibly debarred ourselves from all those objects which other nations have ventured to portray. There is nothing that Dante does not describe after the example of the ancients. He accustomed the Italians to express

[1] Horace was translated into Italian verse by Palavicini; Virgil by Hannibal Caro; Ovid by Auguillara, and Theocritus by Ricolini. The Italians have five good translations of Anacreon. With regard to the English, Dryden has translated Virgil and Juvenal; Pope, Homer; Creech, Lucretius, etc.

Of Virgil there are three English translations besides that by Dryden, viz., Lauderdale's, Trap's, and Pitt's; and we expect soon to see a fourth complete translation of the "Æneid" by Mr. Strahan. We have also Theocritus translated by Creech, and Horace by Francis.

everything; but how could we in the present age imitate the author of the "Georgics," who particularly mentions all the instruments of agriculture? In effect we hardly know them; and our effeminate pride, bred and nourished in the bosom of that peace and luxury which we enjoy in our cities, unhappily affixes a mean idea to these rural labors, and to the description of those useful arts which the lords and legislators of the universe cultivated with their own victorious hands. Had our good poets known how to express little things with propriety, our tongue would have added that merit, which is far from being inconsiderable, to the advantage of having become the first language in the world for the charms of conversation, and the expression of sentiment. The language of the heart, and the style of the theatre have entirely prevailed; they have embellished the French tongue, but have confined its beauties within too narrow limits.

And when I say, gentlemen, that the great poets have determined the genius of languages,[1] I advance

[1] It is impossible in a ceremonial discourse to enter into the reasons of this difficulty that attends our poetry. It proceeds from the idiom of the language; for though M. de la Motte, and several others after him, have asserted in full academy that languages have no idioms, yet it appears demonstrable that each language has its own peculiar idiom.

This idiom is its fitness to express certain ideas with propriety, and its unfitness to express others with precision. Both these peculiarities arise: 1. From the terminations of words. 2. From auxiliary verbs and participles. 3. From the greater or less number of rhymes.

nothing that is not well known to you. The Greeks did not begin to write history till four hundred years after Homer's time; and it was from that great

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4. From the length or shortness of words. 5. From the greater or less variation of cases. 6. From articles and pronouns. 7. From elisions. 8. From inversions. 9. From the quantity of syllables. And, in fine, from an infinite number of minute circumstances, which can be perceived only by those who have thoroughly studied the principles of a language. 1. The terminations of words, such as *perdre, vaincre, un coin, sucre, raste, crotte, perdu, sourdre, fief, coffre;* these harsh syllables grate on the ear, a property for which all the northern tongues are remarkable. 2. Auxiliary verbs and participles: *"Victis hostibus," "les enemis ayant été vaincus."* There are four words for two. *"Læso et invicto milite."* This is the inscription of the invalids at Berlin; were we to translate it into French, it would be *"pour les soldats qui ont été blessés et qui n'ont pas été vaincus;"* how flat and languid! Hence it appears that Latin is more popular for inscriptions than French. 3. The number of rhymes: Open a dictionary of Italian and one of French rhymes, you will always find a greater number of rhymes in the Italian; and you will further remark that in the French there are twenty low and ridiculous rhymes for two that can enter into the noble and majestic style. 4. The length and shortness of words: It is this that renders a language more or less proper for the expression of certain maxims, and the measure of certain verses. We have never been able to translate into French in one good verse: *"Quanto si mostra men tanto è più bella."* Nor have the Italians ever been able to translate into good verses: *"Tel brille au second rang, qui s'eclipse au premier." "C'est un poids bien pesant qu'un nom trop tôt fameux."* 5. The greater or less variation of cases: *Mon père, de mon père, à mon père; meus pater, mei patris, meo patri;* this is clear and distinct. 6. Articles and pronouns: *"De ipsius negotio ei loquebatur." "Con elle parlava dell'*

painter of nature that their tongue derived that superiority which it afterward obtained over all the languages of Europe and Asia. Among the Romans, Terence was the first that expressed himself with elegance and purity; and it was Dante, and after him Petrarch, who gave the Italian tongue that charming sweetness which it has ever since preserved. It is to Lope de Vega that the Spanish owes its pomp and majesty; and it was Shakespeare, rude and unpolished as he was, that infused into the English language that strength and energy which the nation has never since been able to increase, without overstraining, and, consequently, without weakening it. Whence proceeds this grand effort of poetry, by

affaire di lui; il lui parlait de son affaire." No amphibology in the Latin. It is almost unavoidable in the French. We know not whether *son affaire* is that of the man who speaks, or of him to whom the speech is addressed; the pronoun *il* is cut off in the Latin, and it is that which makes the French and the Italian so flat and insipid. 7. Elisions: "*Canto l'arme pietose, e il capitano.*" We cannot say, "*Chantons la Piété et la Vertu heureuse.*" 8. Inversions: "*César cultiva tous les arts utiles;*" we cannot turn this phrase in any other manner. In Latin it can be expressed in twenty different ways: "*Cæsar omnes utiles artes coluit.*" What a surprising difference! 9. The quantity of syllables: This is the soul of harmony. The long and short syllables in the Latin form a truly musical cadence. The more of this property any language possesses, the more harmonious it is. Observe the Italian verses, and you will find that the penult is always long: *Capitano, mâno sêno, christo, acquisto.* From all these particulars we may safely conclude that every tongue has its own peculiar idiom, which men of superior parts discover first, and soon demonstrate to others, by unfolding the true genius of the language.

which it forms and finally fixes the genius of nations, and of their languages? The cause of it is evident: the first good verses, or even such as are but seemingly so, are deeply imprinted on the memory by the aid of harmonious numbers. Their bold and natural turns become familiar; and men, who are all born with a desire and capacity of imitation, insensibly acquire the same manner of expression, and even the same way of thinking with those whose daring imaginations at first got the ascendency over the minds of others. Will you not agree with me, gentlemen, when I say that the true merit and reputation of our tongue began with the author of "The Cid," and of "Cinna?"

Before him Montaigne was the only writer that engaged the attention of the few foreigners who understood the French; but Montaigne's style is neither pure, correct, accurate, nor noble. He is alike remarkable for ease and energy: he expresses great things with plainness and simplicity; and it is this simplicity with which we are charmed; we become fond of the author's character; we are pleased to find our own picture in what he says of himself; we love to converse with him, and to exchange discourse and opinions with him. I have heard many people admire the language of Montaigne; but it is his imagination that we ought to admire; the former is bold and daring, but the latter is far from being so.

Marot, who formed his language by that of Montaigne, is hardly known beyond the limits of his native country; and even among us he is chiefly

valued for some simple tales and some licentious epigrams, the merit of which consists almost always in the subject; and it was owing to our injudicious regard for this trifling merit that our language remained so long unimproved. Poems, history, and books of morality were all written in the tragic style. The judicious Despréaux says: "*Imiter de Marot l'élégant badinage.*" I am inclined to think that he would have said *le naïf badinage,* were it not that this word, which is more correct, would have rendered his verse less harmonious. In fact we have no good performances but such as force their way into foreign nations, and are there studied and translated; but into what foreign language has Marot ever been translated?

Our tongue, for a long time after him, was no better than a familiar jargon, in which we were sometimes happy enough to compose some pieces of humor; but when humor is our only merit, we can never expect to be admired by other nations.

Enfin Malherbe vint, et le premier en France
Fit sentir dans les vers une juste cadence,
D'un mot mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir.

At last great Malherbe came, and first taught France the art,
To rough, unpolished verse just cadence to impart.
Of words in order placed he showed the mighty power.

If Malherbe was the first that showed what happy effects might be produced by the great art of well-placed words, and well-turned periods, he must be allowed to have been the first that was elegant. But are a few harmonious stanzas sufficient to engage

strangers to cultivate our language? They read that admirable poem, the *"Gerusalemme Liberata," "Orlando Furioso," "Pastor Fido,"* and the beautiful pieces of Petrarch: and can they rank with these masterly performances a small number of French verses, well written indeed, but feeble, and almost destitute of imagination?

Thus the French tongue would have forever remained in its former state of mediocrity, without one of those extraordinary men who are made to change and elevate the spirit of a whole nation. It was the greatest of your first academicians, it was Corneille alone, who began to make our language admired by foreigners, at the very time that Cardinal Richelieu began to cause the crown to be respected by the neighboring nations. Both of them spread our glory throughout Europe. Corneille was succeeded, I will not say by men of greater genius, but by better writers. A man arose, who was at once more animated and more correct; less varied indeed, but therefore less unequal; sometimes as sublime, and always as majestic, without running into bombast: an enemy to declamation, he spoke to the heart with more truth, and with more charms —Racine.

One of their contemporaries — Boileau — incapable perhaps of those sublime conceptions which elevate the soul, and of those delicate feelings which melt it into pity, but made to enlighten and direct those whom nature had blessed with both these qualities, laborious, severe, accurate, pure, harmonious, and who, in fine, might be said to be the poet

of reason, began unhappily by writing satires; but soon after equalled, and perhaps surpassed, Horace in his "Moral Epistles," and his "Art of Poetry." He gave precepts and examples; and was at last convinced that the art of instructing, when executed with a masterly hand, succeeds better than the art of satirizing, because satire dies with those who have been the victims of its rage; whereas reason and virtue are eternal. You had, in every branch of literature, that crowd of great men which nature produced, as in the age of Leo X. and in that of Augustus. Then it was that foreigners began to read our authors with avidity; and, thanks in part to Cardinal Richelieu, they adopted our language, as they are now eager to deck themselves with the manufactures of our ingenious artists, for which we are indebted to the labors of the great Colbert.

The late king of Sweden, a monarch admired by all men for his five victories, and still more by the learned on account of his great knowledge, chose our language for his own, and has adopted it in his court and his dominions: he spoke it with that energy and propriety which study alone can never bestow, and which is the true mark of genius. Not only did he study it: he even sometimes embellished and improved it; for great souls will always seize those happy turns and expressions which can never occur to weak minds. Stockholm is blessed with a new Christina, equal to the first in genius, superior in everything else; and she pays the same honor to our language. The French is studied at Rome, where it was formerly despised.

It has now become as familiar to the sovereign pontiff as the learned languages, in which he writes when he instructs the Christian world which he governs. Several Italian cardinals have written in French, in the Vatican, with as much elegance as if they had been born at Versailles. Your works, gentlemen, have forced their way to that capital of the most remote empire of Asia and Europe, and the most extensive in the universe; to that city, which, about forty years ago, was a desert, inhabited only by wild beasts: there your dramatic pieces are now represented; and the same good taste which introduced the Italian music into the city of Peter the Great, and of his worthy daughter, has likewise introduced your eloquence.

This honor, paid by so many nations to our excellent writers, is a proof that Europe owes to us its preservation from degeneracy. I will not say that everything is hastening toward a shameful decay; the common complaint of those satirists, who endeavor to justify their own weakness by that which they impute to the age. I own, indeed, that the glory of our arms is supported with more dignity than that of our learning; but the fire which formerly enlightened us is not yet extinct. Have not these latter years produced the only book of chronology, in which the manners of men, and the characters of courts and ages are painted with a masterly hand? A work, which, were it but dryly instructive, like so many others, would nevertheless be the best of the kind; but in which the author — M. Hénault — has found out the happy secret of

mixing pleasure with instruction; a secret attainable only by those men who are superior to their works.

The causes of the rise and fall of the Roman Empire have been demonstrated in a shorter book still, written by a bold and daring genius — Montesquieu — who goes to the bottom of every subject, while he only seems to skim on the surface. Never had we more elegant and faithful translators than at present: true philosophers have at last begun to write history. A man equally remarkable for the elegance of his style and the solidity of his judgment — Marquis de Vauvenargues — is formed amidst the tumults of war. There are several of these amiable geniuses whom Tibullus and Ovid would have considered as their disciples, and wished to have for their friends. The theatre, I confess, is threatened with a sudden fall; but, at least, I see here that truly tragic genius — M. Crébillon, author of *"Electre"* and *"Rhadamiste"*— whose example I have endeavored to follow, when I ventured to take a few steps in the same career. I view him with a mixture of sorrow and satisfaction, as we behold, on the ruins of our native country, a hero who has bravely fought in its defence. I observe several among you, who, in imitation of the great Molière, have rendered comedy a school of manners and of decency; a school which deserves as much encouragement in France as a less chaste theatre enjoyed at Athens. If that celebrated author who first adorned philosophy with all the graces of poetry

belongs to a more remote age, he is still the honor and the consolation of yours.

Great talents must always be rare, especially when the taste and genius of a nation are formed. It is then with men of letters as it is with forests, where the trees, crowded together, and reared up, will not suffer anyone to raise its head above the rest. When commerce is in a few hands, some people make prodigious fortunes, while the greater number remain poor; but when commerce is more widely diffused, wealth becomes general, and great fortunes are rare. We have, gentlemen, a great deal of genius in France, and that is the very reason why we shall find for the future very few superior geniuses.

But, notwithstanding this universal improvement of the nation, I will not deny that our language, elegant as it now is, and fixed, as one would imagine it ought to be, by so many excellent performances, may nevertheless be easily corrupted. We ought to apprise strangers that it already loses much of its purity in almost all the books composed in the United Provinces — that famous republic, which has been so long our ally, and in which the French is the prevailing language, notwithstanding the factions that oppose France. But if it is corrupted in that country by a mixture of idioms, it is in danger of being corrupted among ourselves by a mixture of different styles. Whatever vitiates the taste of a nation will, in the end, vitiate its language. Some writers endeavor to enliven the most serious and instructive works, by familiar and colloquial expressions. Some introduce the burlesque style of Marot

into the most noble subjects; which is much the same absurdity as if they were to dress a prince in the garb of a harlequin. Some make use of new terms, which are entirely useless, and should never be hazarded but when they are absolutely necessary. There are several other faults, with which I am the more sensibly affected, because I have fallen into some of them myself. But, to preserve me from such errors for the future, I shall find among you, gentlemen, those assistances which my learned predecessor acquired by his studies. Intimately acquainted with the works of Cicero, he had thence derived this advantage, that he studied to speak the French language with as much purity as that consul spoke the Latin. But it belongs to that gentleman, who has made the works of that great orator his particular study, and was the friend of the president Bouhier, to revive among us the eloquence of the one, and to display to you the merit of the other. To-day he has a double task to perform: he has a friend to lament and celebrate, and a friend to receive and encourage. He may tell you with more eloquence than I, but not with more sensibility, what charms friendship gives to the labors of men devoted to the study of letters; how it serves to conduct, correct, excite, and solace them; and how it inspires the soul with that pleasing and agreeable composure without which we can never be master of our own ideas.

In this manner it was that the Academy was at first formed. It has an origin still more noble than that which it received from Cardinal Richelieu; it

took its first rise in the bosom of friendship. Men united by this respectable tie, and by their common taste for the fine arts, met together, without aspiring to fame: they were less illustrious than their successors, but not less happy. Decency, candor, concord, and sound criticism, which is so opposite to satire, inspired their meetings. The same virtues and good qualities will always animate yours: they will be the constant pursuit of men of letters; and will serve, perhaps, to reform those who make themselves unworthy of the name. The true lovers of the arts are always friends. Who has a better right to say so than I? I would take the liberty, gentlemen, to enlarge on the instances of friendship with which most of you have been pleased to honor me, were it not that I am bound in duty to forget my own private concerns, in order to talk of the great object of all your labors, of those interests before which all others should vanish; I mean the glory of the nation.

I know that panegyric, unless it is managed with the greatest delicacy, is a very nauseous and disagreeable subject; I know that the public, ever fond of novelty, imagines that every topic of praise is already exhausted on your founder and protectors. But should I refuse the debt I owe, because those who have paid it before me have left me nothing new to say on the subject? It is with these panegyrics, which are so frequently repeated, as with public solemnities, which are always the same, and which revive the memory of events dear to a whole people: they are necessary. To celebrate such men

as Cardinal Richelieu and Louis XIV., to praise a Séguier, a Colbert, a Turenne, and a Condé, what is it but to cry aloud: "Ye kings, ye ministers, and ye generals, in times to come, imitate these great men?" Is it not well known that Trajan's panegyric excited Antoninus to the study and practice of virtue? And does not Marcus Aurelius, the greatest man and the greatest emperor that ever lived, confess, in his writings, the spirit of emulation with which the virtues of Antoninus filled him? When Henry IV. heard the appellation of "Father of his People" given to Louis XII. in parliament, he felt himself inspired with an ambition of imitating him, and he actually surpassed him.

Do you think, gentlemen, that the honors paid by so many mouths to the memory of Louis XIV. had not a strong influence on the mind of his successor from his earliest youth? It will one day be said, that both of them attained to immortality, sometimes by the same, and sometimes by different roads. Both will be equal in this respect, that they never disburdened themselves of the load of public affairs, but out of gratitude to good ministers; and this circumstance, perhaps, will constitute their greatest glory. Posterity will say that both of them loved justice, and commanded their armies. The one sought, by the most noble achievements, the glory which he so well deserved: he called her to him from the height of his throne; and she was his constant attendant in all his conquests, and in all his enterprises, till at last she filled the world with his name. He displayed a great soul, as well in

adversity as prosperity, in the field, in his palace, and in all the courts of Europe and of Asia. The sea and the land bore witness to his power; and the most inconsiderable objects had no sooner acquired a connection with him, than they presently assumed a new character, and received the stamp of his grandeur. The other protects kings and emperors, subdues provinces, and interrupts the course of his conquests to go and relieve his subjects; to which godlike office he flies from the bosom of death, whose fatal stroke he had hardly escaped. He obtains victories, and performs the most noble exploits with such an ease and unconcern as would make us imagine that what strikes other men with astonishment is to him only in the ordinary and common course of nature. He conceals the greatness of his soul, without endeavoring to conceal it; but is not able to weaken those rays of majesty, which piercing, in spite of all his endeavors to the contrary, the veil of his modesty, thence derive a more durable lustre.

Louis XIV. signalized himself by the most glorious achievements, by the great love he entertained for all the arts, and by the royal encouragement he so cheerfully gave them. O you, his august successor, you have already imitated his noble example; and you wait only for that peace, which you endeavor to obtain by your victories, to accomplish all your generous projects, which cannot be executed but in the bosom of quiet and tranquillity.

You began your victories in that very province where those of your great-grandfather were begun,

and you have already extended them to a greater distance. He lamented that, in the course of his glorious campaigns, he could not oblige an enemy worthy of such a noble antagonist, to engage with him in a pitched battle. That glory, which he so ardently desired, you have enjoyed. Happier than the great Henry, who hardly gained any victories but over his own subjects, you have conquered the eternal and intrepid enemies of your crown. Your son, next to you the object of our prayers and our dread, learned at your side to behold danger and misfortune without being troubled, and the most glorious triumph without being dazzled. When we were trembling for you in Paris, you were in a field of carnage. Composed in those moments of horror and confusion, composed amidst the tumultuous joy of your victorious troops, you embraced that general — the late Count de Saxe — who only wished to live that he might see you triumph; that man, whom your virtues and his own conspired to make your subject, and whom France will ever number among her dearest and most illustrious children. You rewarded, by your approbation and praises, all those who had contributed to the victory; and this reward is the most glorious that Frenchmen can receive.

But what will forever be preserved in the annals of the Academy, and must afford the greatest satisfaction to each of you, gentlemen, is, that one of your fellow-members performed the most important service to your protector, and to France, in that glorious battle. He it was who after having run

from rank to rank, and after having fought in so many different places, flew to give and to execute that advice that was so seasonable, so salutary, and so readily embraced by the king, whose penetrating eye discerned everything in those moments when the mind is most apt to wander. Enjoy, gentlemen, enjoy the pleasure of hearing in this assembly the very words which your protector said to the marshal, Duke de Richelieu, — the nephew of your founder — on the field of battle: "I shall never forget the important service you have done me." But if this glory be so dear to you, how dear must be to all France, and how dear will one day be to Europe in general, those pacific steps which Louis XV. took after his victories! He still pursues the same measures; he never attacks his enemies, but in order to disarm them; he does not desire to conquer them, but in order to make them agree to reasonable terms of accommodation. Did they but know the real sentiments of his heart, they would make him their arbiter, instead of their enemy; and that, perhaps, would be the only method of gaining advantages over him. The virtues which render him such a formidable foe they have fully experienced, from the time of his assuming the command of his armies; but those which ought to engage their trust and confidence, and ought to be the bond of union among different nations, require a longer time to be discovered by an enemy.

We, in this respect more happy, have known the goodness of his heart from the moment of his mounting the throne. We have thought of him as

all ages and all nations will ever think. Never was love more sincere or more emphatically expressed than ours. All our hearts felt its force, and your eloquent mouths were the interpreters of our inward feelings. Medals, worthy of the most illustrious times of Greece, eternize his triumphs and our happiness. May I behold in our public places this humane monarch, carved by the hands of our Praxiteleses, and environed with all the symbols of public happiness! And may I read at the feet of his statue those words which are already in all our hearts: "To the Father of his Country!"

A FUNERAL EULOGIUM BY VOLTAIRE,

ON THE OFFICERS WHO DIED IN THE WAR OF 1741.

A PEOPLE who set an example of everything good and great to all the other nations of the earth, who taught them all the arts, and even the art of war, the masters of the Romans, who have been our masters, the Greeks, I mean, among their excellent institutions, which are still the object of our admiration, established the custom of consecrating by funeral eulogiums the memory of those citizens who had shed their blood in the service of their country: a custom worthy of Athens; worthy of a brave and humane nation, and worthy of us! Why then should we not follow such a noble precedent — we who have so long, and in so many respects, been the happy rivals of that illustrious nation? Why confine ourselves to the servile custom of celebrating after their death none but those who, being rendered conspicuous in the world by their exalted stations, have been surfeited with the incense of praise during their lives?

It is doubtless just, it is even conducive to the interests of society, to praise a Titus, a Trajan, a Louis XII., a Henry IV., and others of like character: but shall we always pay to the dignity of rank those duties which are so interesting and agreeable when they are paid to the merit of the person; those duties, which are so vain when they are only a necessary part of the funeral pomp; when the

heart is not affected; when the vanity of the orator speaks to the vanity of the audience; and when in a set discourse, and in forced divisions, we exhaust our own invention and our hearers' patience in unmeaning eulogiums, which pass away with the smoke of the funeral lights? At least, if we must always celebrate those who have been great, let us sometimes revive the memory of those who have been useful. Happy beyond all doubt — if the voice of the living can pierce the darksome tomb — happy the magistrate, immortalized by the same organ who caused so many tears to be shed for the death of Mary of England, and who was worthy to celebrate the praises of the great Condé! But if the ashes of Michael Letellier received such signal honors, is there a good citizen that does not now ask whether the same honors have been paid to the great Colbert, to that man who diffused such an exuberance of plenty by reviving industry; who carried his extensive views to the extremities of the globe; who rendered France the mistress of the seas, and to whom we owe a grandeur and felicity long unknown?

O ye immortal shades! O ye names of those happy few who have served the state with fidelity, be ye ever held in grateful remembrance; but especially perish not entirely, ye warriors, who have died in our defence. It was by your blood that we purchased our victories: it was upon your mangled and panting bodies that your fellow-soldiers advanced to the enemy, and mounted so many ramparts: it is to you we owe a glorious peace, the price

of your destruction. The more war is considered as a dreadful scourge, comprehending all manner of crimes and calamities, the more sincere should be our gratitude to these, our brave countrymen, who have died to give us that happy peace which ought to be the only end of war, and the sole object of ambition to a wise monarch.

Weak and foolish mortals as we are, who reason so wisely on our various duties, who make such profound researches into the nature of our own constitution, and into the sources of our frailties and calamities, we make our temples perpetually resound with our reproaches and condemnations; we anathematize the slightest irregularities of conduct, and the most secret indulgences of the heart: we thunder against vices and against faults, blamable indeed, but which hardly disturb the peace of society. But what voice, commissioned to teach virtue, has ever been raised against this crime, which is so great and so universal: against that destructive rage which transforms into beasts of prey men who were born to live like brothers; against those barbarous depredations and shocking cruelties which make the earth a scene of robbery and desolation, and convert flourishing and populous cities into horrid and gloomy tombs? The violation of treaties the most sacred and solemn, the grossness of those impostures which precede the horrors of war; the impudence of those calumnies which fill the declarations of the contending parties; the infamy of those rapines which are capitally punished in private men, but extolled as acts of heroism in the leaders of nations;

theft, robbery, sacking of cities, bankrupts, and the ruin of thousands of wealthy merchants; their families wandering from place to place, and in vain begging alms at the gates of publicans enriched with their spoils; these are a few of the many crimes and calamities that are the constant concomitants of war; and yet these crimes are committed without the least remorse; and the ministers of the Gospel thunder in their pulpits against the dress of the ladies, and against the exhibition of plays, which are not only innocent but useful.

From the banks of the Po to those of the Danube they bless in the name of the same God, the colors under which march thousands of mercenary murderers who, from a spirit of lewdness, debauchery, and rapine, have left their native fields. They go and change their masters: they expose themselves to an infamous punishment for the sake of the most trifling advantage. The day of battle comes; and the soldier, who had hardly ranged himself under the colors of his country, frequently sheds without remorse the blood of his fellow-citizens. He impatiently waits for the moment when, in the field of slaughter, he may tear from the dying some wretched spoils, which are snatched from himself by other hands. Such is too often the soldier; such is that blind and savage multitude which is employed to change the fate of empires, and to raise the monuments of glory. Viewed in one collective body, and marching under the command of a great captain, they form the most august and the most charming spectacle in the world. Taken separately, and in the

excesses of drunkenness and brutal debauchery — if you except a small number — they are the dregs of nations.

Such is not the officer; jealous of his own honor and of that of his sovereign; braving death in cold blood, though possessed of every advantage that can make him in love with life; cheerfully quitting the pleasures of society for the dangers that make nature tremble; humane, generous, and compassionate, while barbarity rages all around him; born for the sweets of society, as well as for the dangers of war; equally polite and brave, he is frequently adorned with learning, and still more by the graces of the mind. Such is the character which foreigners give our officers: they confess more particularly, that when the too ardent heat of youth is tempered by a little experience, they make themselves beloved even by their enemies. But if their graceful and open behavior has been sometimes able to soften the most barbarous minds, what has not their valor performed?

These are they who defended for so many months the capital of Bohemia, conquered by their hands in so short a time; they who attacked and even besieged their besiegers; who fought such long battles in their trenches; who braved the enemy, hunger, death, and the uncommon severity of the season, in that memorable march, not so long indeed as that of the Greeks under Xenophon, but as painful and as hazardous. We have seen them, under the conduct of a general equally brave and vigilant, precipitate their enemies from the top of the Alps,

victorious at once over all the obstacles which nature, art, and valor opposed to their invincible courage. Ye fields of Fontenoy, ye banks of the Scheldt and the Meuse, stained with their blood, it was on your plains that their valor brought victory to the feet of that king, whom the nations combined against him should have chosen for their arbiter! What noble exploits were performed by these heroes, the number of whom is hardly known?

In what then were the centurions and tribunes of the Roman legions their superiors? In what did they excel them, if it was not, perhaps, in their invariable love of military discipline? The ancient Romans, it is true, eclipsed all the other nations of Europe, when Greece was sunk in effeminacy, and divided in her councils; and when other nations were as yet barbarians, destitute of good laws, knowing how to fight, but ignorant of the art of war, incapable of uniting their joint efforts against the common foe; without commerce, without arts, and without every resource that would enable them to preserve their liberties. No nation has ever equalled the ancient Romans. But Europe, taken together, in its present condition, is greatly superior to that conquering and legislative people, whether we consider the many branches of knowledge that have been brought to perfection, or the many new discoveries that have been made; whether we survey that extensive and advantageous commerce which unites both worlds, or those rich and flourishing cities raised in places which under the consuls and Cæsars were no better than barren deserts; whether we cast

our eyes on those numerous and disciplined armies which defend twenty kingdoms blessed with a regular government, or endeavor to pierce the veil of that policy, ever deep and ever active, which holds the balance among so many nations. In a word, that spirit of jealousy itself which reigns among the moderns, which excites their genius, and animates their labors, serves to raise Europe to a pitch of grandeur greatly superior to what we admire in ancient Rome, without being either able or willing to resemble it.

But is there a nation in the world that can boast of containing such a number of excellent officers as ours? Sometimes, in other countries, men enter into the service in order to make their fortunes; among us they throw away their fortunes for the mere pleasure of serving: elsewhere they sell their blood to foreign masters; here they burn with the desire of sacrificing their lives for their king: there they march because they are paid; here they fly to death, in order to obtain the approbation of their master; and honor has always done greater things than interest.

In speaking of such noble exploits and such glorious actions, we frequently dispense with the tribute of gratitude, by saying that ambition was the spring of all. But this is the logic of the ungrateful. They who serve us, I own, would wish to rise in the service; yes, they are animated by that noble ambition, without which there would never be a great man. And indeed if they had not in their eyes those grand objects that redouble the love of their duty, they

would be but poorly recompensed by the public, who, though they are sometimes warm and even precipitate in their praises, are always more apt to censure; passing from enthusiasm to indifference, and from indifference to forgetfulness.

Sybarites, as we are, who live at ease in our flourishing cities, employed in the refinements of luxury, become insensible to everything, and even to pleasure itself, through an excess of indulgence; tired with those daily diversions, the least of which would have charmed our ancestors, and satiated with continual repasts, more delicious than the feasts of kings; amidst so many pleasures, at once so accumulated and so little enjoyed; surrounded by so many arts and finished performances, so perfect and so neglected; intoxicated and lulled to sleep, as it were, in the bosom of peace and self-conceit, we hear the news of a battle; we awake from our pleasing lethargy to ask with eagerness the particulars that are talked of at random, to censure the general, to diminish the loss of the enemy, and to magnify our own. Meanwhile, five or six hundred families in the kingdom are either bathed in tears or filled with the most dreadful apprehensions. They groan, and retiring into the most secret parts of their houses, demand from heaven their brothers, their husbands, and their children. The peaceful inhabitants of Paris repair in the evening to the theatre, whither they are drawn by custom, rather than by inclination; and if at the repast, which succeeds the play, they happen to talk of the deceased with whom they were acquainted, they do it sometimes with indiffer-

ence; sometimes by reviving the memory of their faults, when they ought only to remember their loss; or even sometimes by exercising that easy and mischievous talent of malicious wit against them, as if they were still living.

But when we hear that a reverse of fortune, such as the greatest commanders have in all ages experienced, has retarded the progress of our arms, we are then thrown into the deepest despair; we then put on the appearance of fear, without feeling the least real apprehension. Our bitter reproaches persecute, even in the grave, the general whose days have been cut short in an unsuccessful engagement. But do we know what were his designs, and his resources, or can we, from our gilded rooms, which we have hardly ever left, discern, with a glance of the eye, the particular spot on which he fought? He whom you accuse may have erred; but he died fighting for you. What! Shall our books, our schools, and our historical declamations, incessantly repeat the name of a Cinegerus, who, having lost his arms in seizing a Persian bark, endeavored in vain to hold it with his teeth? And shall we blame our countryman, who lost his life in snatching in the same manner, the palisades of the enemy's intrenchments at the battle of Exilles, when he was no longer able to seize them with his wounded hands?

Let us not fill our minds with these examples of antiquity, oftentimes too slightly proved, and greatly exaggerated; but let us reserve some room, at least, for those instances of heroism, whether successful or unsuccessful, which our fellow-citizens have

given. Was not the young Brienne, who, on having his arm broken at the battle of Exilles, mounted the ladder, crying: "I have another left for my king and my country," equal to a native of Latium or Attica? Should not all those who, like him, advanced to meet the death they could not give to their enemies, be dearer to us than the ancient warriors of a foreign land? Did not they merit a hundred times more praise, and acquire more glory by dying under the inaccessible bulwarks, than their enemies did in defending themselves with safety, and in killing them without difficulty or danger?

What shall I say of those who died at the battle of Dettingen; a battle so well planned, and so ill conducted, and in which the general needed only to be obeyed, in order to put an end to the war? Among those whose unsuccessful valor and untimely death history shall celebrate, shall we forget a young Boufflers, a child of ten years of age, who having a leg broken in that battle, caused it to be cut off, and died without complaint? — an instance of fortitude rarely to be found among warriors, and the only one ever given by a boy of that age!

If we turn our eyes to actions not more brave indeed, but more fortunate, how many heroes do we find whose names and achievements ought forever to be in our mouths! How many countries sprinkled with the noblest blood, and famous for the most glorious victories! There were raised against us a hundred bulwarks, which are now no more. What has become of those fortifications of Freiburg, bathed with blood, tottering under their defenders,

and surrounded with the lifeless bodies of the besiegers? We still see the ramparts of Namur, and those castles which make the astonished traveller cry: "How could they reduce this fortress which touched the clouds!" We still behold Ostend, which formerly sustained sieges of three years' continuance, and which in five days surrendered to our victorious arms. Every plain, every city in these countries is a monument of our glory; but what has this glory cost!

O ye happy peoples, give, at least, to your countrymen who have died the victims of this glory, or who still survive a part of themselves, the rewards which their ashes or their wounds demand. If you refuse them this boon, the trees, the fields of Flanders will assume a voice, and tell you, it was there that the modest and intrepid Luttaux, laden with years, and exhausted by a long service, wounded already in two places, weak, and losing blood, cried out: "We must not now think of preserving life; we must endeavor to render the remains of it useful;" and leading back to the combat the dispersed troops, received the mortal blow which brought him at last to the grave. It was there that the colonel of the French guards, going to reconnoitre the enemy, was the first that perished in that bloody battle, and expired offering prayers for his king and his country. At a greater distance died Marquis de Fénelon, the nephew of the famous archbishop of Cambray, the inheritor of the virtues of that excellent man, who rendered virtue truly amiable.

How justly then did the posts of the fathers

become the inheritance of the sons! Who could feel the least spark of envy, when, on the ramparts of Tournay, one of those subterranean thunders which baffle the efforts of valor, and elude the precautions of prudence, having carried away the bloody and scattered limbs of the colonel of Normandy, the regiment was given the same day to his son, and that invincible body was hardly sensible of having changed its leader. Thus that foreign troop, which has become so national, and which bears the name of Dillon, has seen sons and brothers rapidly succeed their fathers and brothers, who fell in battle. Thus the brave d'Aubeterre, the only colonel killed at the siege of Brussels, was replaced by his courageous brother. Why was it necessary that death should deprive us of him likewise?

The government of Flanders, that eternal theatre of war, has justly fallen to the share of the duke de Boufflers, the warrior who exposed his life so frequently in one day at the battle of Rocoux. His father marched by his side at the head of his regiment, and taught him to command and to conquer. Death, who respected this generous and tender parent in the battle of Rocoux, where he was continually hovering around him, waited for him in Genoa under a different form: there he perished, grieving that he could not shed his blood on the bastions of the besieged city: but with the consolation of leaving Genoa free, and carrying with him to the grave the title of its deliverer.

Wherever we turn our eyes, whether to that city delivered from oppression, or to the Po, and the

Ticino, to the top of the Alps, or to the banks of the Scheldt, the Meuse, and the Danube, we everywhere behold actions worthy of immortality, or deaths which deserve our eternal lamentations.

We must be stupid not to admire such heroic achievements, and barbarous not to be affected with the melancholy scenes they occasion. Let us put ourselves for a moment in the place of a fearful spouse, embracing in her children the image of her young husband, whom she tenderly loves; while the warrior, who had sought danger on so many occasions, and had been wounded so frequently, marches against the enemy, in the suburbs of Genoa, at the head of his brave troop; that man who, after the example of his family, at once cultivated the study of letters and the art of war, and whose genius was equal to his valor, receives the fatal blow he had so long sought: he dies: at this news the disconsolate half of himself faints away in the midst of her children, who are not yet capable of being sensible of their loss. Here a mother and a wife resolve to set out for Flanders, to succor the count de Froulai, a young hero, whose wisdom and valor, greater than his years, justly procured him the affection of the dauphin, and seemed to promise him a glorious life; but while they are flattering themselves with the agreeable hopes of preserving his life by their tender care, they are told that he is dead. What a moment! What a fatal blow to the daughter of an unfortunate emperor, passionately fond of her husband — the count de Bavière — who is her only consolation, her only hope in a foreign country, to

be told: " Never more will you see the tender spouse for whom alone you desire to live! "

A mother flies, without stopping, into Flanders, amidst the cruel agonies into which she is thrown by the wound of her young son, the marquis de Ségur. Already had she seen in the battle of Rocoux his body pierced and torn with one of those terrible wounds which leave the survivor only a languishing life: this time she thinks herself too happy: she returns thanks to heaven on seeing her son deprived only of an arm, when she trembled with the apprehension of finding him in his grave.

In this review let us neither follow the order of time nor that of our exploits and losses. Our feelings disdain the confinement of rules. I transport myself to the fields in the neighborhood of Augsburg, where the father of the young warrior of whom I am now speaking saved the remains of our army, and delivered them from the pursuit of the enemy, whom numbers and treachery rendered greatly superior. But in the execution of this difficult task, we lost the last branch of the house of Rupelmonde; that officer so learned and so amiable, who had studied the art of war with the most profound attention, and who joined intrepidity of soul, solidity of judgment, and brilliancy of wit to the most polite and engaging address: he leaves a wife and a mother worthy of such a son, bathed in tears and plunged into a state of the deepest melancholy and dejection.

Now ye scornful and trifling minds, who lavish your insulting and misplaced raillery on all that

softens the noble and tender heart; ye who, in the striking events which determine the fate of kingdoms, seek only to distinguish yourselves by those puns and jests which you call wit, and who, on that account, pretend to a kind of superiority in the world, exert here, if ye dare, the despicable efforts of a weak and barbarous imagination; or rather, if ye have the least spark of humanity, join in the common grief, and mingle your tears with those of the public. But are ye worthy to weep?

Let not those especially, who have been the sharers of so many dangers, and the witnesses of so many losses, contract in the voluptuous indolence of our cities, and in the lightness of conversation, that habit to which our nation is so much addicted, of diffusing an air of ridicule and derision on all that is most glorious in life, and most terrible in death. Would they be so foolish as thus to degrade themselves, and to tarnish what it is to their interest to honor?

Let those who employ their whole time in reading our empty and ridiculous romances; let those whose bad taste can be pleased only with those puerile thoughts, more false than delicate, with which we are daily surfeited, disdain the simple tribute of sorrow that springs from the heart: let them tire of these true pictures of our grandeur and our losses, these sincere eulogiums given to names and virtues unknown to them; I will nevertheless continue to strew flowers on the tombs of our defenders; I will raise my feeble voice, and cry: "Here was cut off, in the bloom of life, that young warrior, whose

brothers fight under our standards, and whose father protected the arts at Florence, under a foreign dominion. There was pierced with a mortal wound the marquis de Beauvau, his cousin, when the worthy grandson of the great Condé forced the city of Ypres to surrender." Tormented with incredible pain, and surrounded by our soldiers, who disputed with each other the honor of carrying him off, he said to them in a dying voice, "My friends, go where your presence is necessary; go and fight, and leave me to die by myself." Who can sufficiently praise his frank and noble behavior, his social virtues, his knowledge, his love of learning, and that judicious taste for ancient monuments, which died with him? Thus perished by a violent death, and in the flower of their age, a number of men, from whom their country expected to derive the greatest glory and advantage; while the useless incumbrances of the earth, grown old in laziness, amuse themselves in our gardens, and take a pleasure in being the first to relate the news of these calamitous events.

O fate! O destiny! our days are numbered: the moment eternally fixed arrives, and annihilates all our projects, and all our hopes. The count de Bissy, ready to receive the honors which are so greatly desired, even by those on whom honors are accumulated, runs from Genoa to Maestricht, and the last fire from the ramparts deprives him of life: he was the last victim that was sacrificed, and fell at the very moment which heaven had prescribed to put an end to so much bloodshed. O war! thou who

hast filled France with glory, and with sorrow, thou dost not strike solely by those sudden blows which bring destruction in a moment! How many citizens, how many of our friends and relatives have been ravished from us by a slow death, occasioned by the fatigue of long marches, and the severity of the seasons!

Thou art now no more, O sweet hope of the rest of my days! O my tender friend, educated in the king's invincible regiment, which has always been conducted by heroes, which signalized itself so remarkably in the trenches of Prague, in the battle of Fontenoy, and in that of Lawfeld, where it decided the victory! The retreat from Prague, for the space of thirty leagues, and through roads covered with ice, cast into thy bosom the seeds of death, which my sad eyes afterward saw unfolded: familiarized to the view of death, thou beheldest him approach with that indifference which the ancient philosophers endeavored either to acquire or to assume. Racked by pain, both within and without, deprived of sight, and every day losing a part of thyself, nothing but the most extraordinary degree of virtue could have prevented thy being miserable; and yet this virtue sat so easily upon thee that it seemed to cost thee no trouble. I have always seen thee the most unfortunate and the most composed of mankind. The world would never have known the great loss it has sustained in thy death, had not a man, equally remarkable for his humanity and eloquence, composed thy eulogium, in a work consecrated to friendship, and embellished with charms of the most

moving poetry. I am not surprised, that, amidst the tumults of war, thou didst cultivate the study of letters and of wisdom: these examples are not rare among us. If those who had only the ostentation of merit could never impose upon thee; if those who, even in the tender intercourse of friendship, are guided only by the motives of vanity, provoked thy indignation, there were nevertheless some noble and ingenuous minds which resembled thine own. If the elevation of thy thoughts would not suffer thee to stoop to the perusal of licentious performances, the transient delight of giddy youth, who are rather pleased with the subject than the execution; if thou didst despise that mass of books produced by bad taste; if those who endeavor only to be smart and witty appeared to thee in such a mean and contemptible light; thou didst possess this solidity of judgment in common with those who always maintain the cause of reason against that inundation of bad taste, which seems to threaten us with a speedy decay. But by what prodigy didst thou acquire, at the age of twenty-five, the knowledge of true philosophy, and the talent of true eloquence? How wast thou able to soar so high, in an age of folly and trifling? And how did the simplicity of infant bashfulness cover the depth and strength of thy genius! I shall long remember, with sorrow, the value of thy friendship, the charms of which I had hardly begun to taste: it was not that vain friendship which springs from the participation in vain pleasures, which vanishes with them, and of which we have always reason to repent; but it was that steady and

rational friendship, which, of all the virtues, is the most uncommon. It was thy loss that first put into my heart the design of paying some honor to the ashes of so many defenders of the state, that I might likewise raise a monument to thine. My heart, filled with the remembrance of thee, naturally sought for this consolation, without foreseeing to what use this discourse might be destined, nor how it would be received by the malignity of mankind, who commonly, indeed, spare the dead, but sometimes, however, insult their ashes, especially when it can serve as a fresh pretext for tearing the living in pieces.

June 1, 1748.

N. B.—The young man whose death is here so justly lamented, is M. de Vauvenargues, who was long a captain in the king's regiment. I know not whether I am mistaken, but I imagine the reader will find, in the second edition of his book, more than a hundred thoughts which plainly show him to have been a youth of the most amiable disposition, deeply skilled in philosophy, and entirely free from all spirit of party and faction.

The following maxims are submitted to the consideration of the judicious:

"We are more frequently deceived by reason than by nature."

"If the passions lead us oftener astray than the judgment, it is for the same reason that rulers commit more faults than private men."

"Great thoughts flow from the heart." (In this

manner, without knowing it, he drew his own character.)

"The conscience of the dying reproaches his life."

"Fortitude or timidity, at the hour of death, depends on the last sickness."

I would advise the reader to peruse the following maxims with great care, and to endeavor to explain them:

"The thought of death deceives us; for it makes us forget to live."

"Of all kinds of philosophy, that is the most false which, under the pretence of freeing men from the dominion of the passions, advises them to live in a state of listless indolence."

"We owe, perhaps, to the passions the greatest advantages of a mental nature."

"What does not hurt the interests of society does not belong to the cognizance of justice."

"Whoever is more severe than the laws is a tyrant."

It is evident, methinks, from these few maxims, that we cannot say of him what one of the most amiable geniuses of the present age has said of these party-philosophers, of these new stoics, who have imposed their doctrines on the ignorant:

Ils ont eu l'art de bien connaître
L'homme qu'ils ont imaginé,
Mais ils n'ont jamais deviné
Ce qu'il est, ni ce qu'il doit être.

They studied and presented man,
As their own brains had formed the creature;

But all their art could never scan
The genuine workmanship of Nature.

I do not know that any of those who have undertaken the instruction of mankind have ever written anything more sensible than his chapter on "Natural and Moral Evil." I do not pretend to say that everything is equally good in this book; but, if my judgment is not warped by the influence of friendship, I hardly know any book that is more proper to form a well-disposed and teachable mind. What further confirms me in the opinion of the excellence of this work, which M. de Vauvenargues has left behind him is, that I have seen it despised by those who love nothing but false wit and quaint expressions.

THE "ANTI-LUCRETIUS"
OF CARDINAL DE POLIGNAC.

AFTER reading the whole of the late Cardinal de Polignac's poem, I was confirmed in the opinion I had entertained of it, when his excellency did me the honor to read me the first canto. It is a matter of great surprise how anyone, in the midst of so many and so troublesome avocations, should have had either leisure or inclination to compose so long a work in verse, and in a foreign language, when, at the same time, he was not capable of writing four good lines of poetry in his own tongue. He appears to me to have united the fire of Lucretius with the elegance of Virgil; I especially admire in him that extreme ease with which he always expresses the most difficult things.

His "Anti-Lucretius" may perhaps be somewhat too loose, and want that variety which generally pleases; but in this place I examine it as a philosopher, not as a poet. I cannot but think that so noble a soul as his should have done more justice to the morals of Epicurus, who, though undoubtedly a very bad natural philosopher, was nevertheless a good man, and carefully taught the principles of benignity, temperance, moderation, and justice; virtues which he rendered still more amiable by his example than his precepts.

And yet we find this great man thus called upon in the "Anti-Lucretius," Book i, v. 524:

Si virtutis eras avidus, etc.

But Epicurus might, with great justice, have made the cardinal the following reply: "Had it been my happy lot, as it was yours, to have known the true God; had I, like you, been born in a pure and holy faith; I should certainly never have rejected the revelations of this God whose doctrine was unknown to my understanding, although my heart avowed its moral principles. I never could admit a belief in the deities, such as they were revealed to me by the pagan religion. I had too enlightened a reason to adore deities, who were born of a father and mother, like mortals, and made war against each other. I was too much of a lover of virtue not to detest a religion that at one time encouraged the commission of sin by the example of the gods themselves, and at another sold for money the remission of the most flagrant and unnatural crimes. On the one hand, I beheld mankind in general deformed with vice, and endeavoring to render themselves pure in the sight of deities as impure as themselves; while, on the other, I beheld a set of designing men, who boasted in justifying the most wicked actions, either by initiating those who committed them into the holy mysteries, or by dropping on them the blood of heifers, or by plunging them in the waters of the Ganges. I saw the most unjust wars undertaken with a show of religion, if the liver of a victim happened to be without a blemish, or a woman, with dishevelled hair and a distracted countenance, uttered certain words which neither herself nor any of the bystanders understood. In a word, I saw the whole earth

stained with the blood of human victims, which the high priests poured out in sacrifices to the barbarous deities. I gloried in the abhorrence I showed to such a religion. Mine was that of virtue: I invited my disciples to withdraw themselves from any commerce with a world that was so badly governed. A true Epicurean was a mild, moderate, just, and amiable being, who gave offence to no community of people, and who never kept paid executioners to murder, in the face of the world, those who did not happen to think as he did. How inconsiderable then is the difference between your religion and mine! I overturned the worship of false gods; and, had I lived when you did, I should have acknowledged the true one."

Nearly in this manner might Epicurus have endeavored to justify his errors: he might even claim a right to pardon for having opposed the immortality of the soul, by saying: "I am to be pitied, rather than condemned, for having opposed a truth which God did not think proper to reveal till five hundred years after my death. I thought in the same manner with all the lawgivers of the heathen world, who were equally ignorant of the truth as myself."

I could therefore have wished that Cardinal de Polignac had lamented Epicurus for his error, at the same time that he condemned him; and such a turn of thought was by no means incompatible with the beauties of poetry.

With regard to natural philosophy, it appears to me that the author has wasted much time, and

many good verses, in refuting the declension of atoms, and other absurdities with which the poem of Lucretius swarms. This is like levelling a cannon against an ant-hill. Besides, what reason could he have for combating the dreams of Lucretius, only to substitute those of Descartes in their place?

Cardinal de Polignac has, in the course of his poem, introduced some very beautiful verses upon the discoveries of the great Newton; but, unhappily for him, he there opposes demonstrated truths. The Newtonian philosophy is not to be discussed in verse; we can hardly investigate it in prose. It is founded wholly on geometry, which eludes the grasp of a poetical genius. Poetry may, indeed, embellish the outside of the system; but those who mean to dive into the truths it contains must have recourse to calculation, and not to verse.

ON FABLE.

SOME rigid persons, more severe than wise, have of late years endeavored to proscribe the ancient mythology as a collection of puerile stories, unworthy the gravity of our modern manners. It would, notwithstanding, be a melancholy affair to burn Ovid, Homer, and Hesiod, together with all our fine tapestry, our pictures, and operas: after all, there are many fables which contain more philosophy than, I fear, many of these philosophers can justly pretend to. If they grant a toleration to the familiar tales of Æsop, why fall sword in hand on those sublime fables which have been revered by mankind, whom they have instructed? They are, it is true, mixed with some things which border somewhat upon the frivolous; for what is there perfect under the sun? Yet every age will adopt Pandora's box, in the bottom of which is found consolation for all the human race; Jupiter's two vessels, which are perpetually pouring forth good and evil; Ixion embracing a cloud, at once the emblem and chastisement of an ambitious mind; and lastly, the death of Narcissus, the punishment of self-love. Can there be anything more sublime than that Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, should spring from the head of the god of gods? Can anything be more true, or more pleasing, than that the goddess of beauty should be obliged to go accompanied with graces? Do not the goddesses of the arts, all of them daughters of Memory, inform

us as well as Locke himself could, that without memory we are not capable of the smallest spark of sense? The arrows of Cupid, his blindness and his youth; Flora embraced by Zephyrus, etc.; what are they but so many sensible emblems of nature? These fables have outlived the religions by which they were consecrated; the temples and gods of Egypt, Greece, and Rome are now no more; and yet Ovid still survives. We may destroy the objects of credulity, but the instruments of pleasure will still remain; and those images, at once so true and so pleasing, will ever be the favorite delight of the mind of man. Lucretius did not believe those gods of fable; yet he has celebrated nature under the name of Venus.

> Delight of human kind, and gods above,
> Parent of Rome, propitious queen of love,
> Whose vital power air, earth, and sea supplies,
> And breeds whate'er is born beneath the skies.
> For every kind, by thy prolific might,
> Springs, and beholds the regions of the light.
>
> — DRYDEN.

If antiquity, plunged in darkness, had confined itself to the acknowledging a Supreme Being under those images, could we with justice have loaded it with reproaches? The mind which created the world was adored by philosophers; it governed the seas under the name of Neptune, the air under the emblem of Juno, and the fields under that of Pan; it was the god of armies under the name of Mars: they gave life and body to all the attributes: Jupiter was in truth their sole deity: that golden

chair, with which he lifted up gods and men, was a striking image of a Supreme Being, the sovereign of the universe. The vulgar, it is true, were deceived; but of what consequence are the vulgar to us?

It is a common question, how the magistrates of Greece and Rome could suffer those very deities that were worshipped in their temples to be turned into ridicule on their stages. In this we proceed on a false supposition: it was not the gods who were turned into ridicule in the theatre, but the follies and absurdities attributed to these gods by those who had corrupted the ancient mythology. The consuls and prætors were not at all offended to see the people diverted in the theatres with the story of the two Sosias; but they could never have suffered their poets to attack the worship of Jupiter and Mercury, in the presence of the people. Thus there are a thousand things which seem ridiculous to us, which are by no means so in themselves. I have seen in the theatre of a nation justly celebrated for learning and good sense, adventures which were drawn from the "Golden Legend;" shall we therefore say that this nation permits the objects of religion to be insulted? There is no danger the world would become Pagans for having seen in Paris the opera of " Proserpine," or for having seen in Rome the marriage of Psyche, painted by Raphael, in one of the pope's palaces. Fable serves to form the taste, but, at the same time, without any danger of making converts to idolatry.

The beautiful fables of antiquity have this further

advantage over history, which is, that they exhibit a morality which acts on the senses: they are so many lessons of virtue; whereas all history is but a revelation of successful crimes. In fable, Jupiter descends to punish a Lycaon and a Tantalus; but, in history, our Lycaons and our Tantaluses are the gods who sway all human affairs. Baucis and Philemon obtain their request, and their cottage is turned into a temple: our Baucis and Philemon have their porridge-pots sold by the tax-gatherers, which, in Ovid, are changed into gold and silver.

I know how capable history is of instructing us; I even know the necessity of that study; but yet it stands very much in need of some foreign aid, to be able to furnish us with the rules of a prudent and virtuous behavior. I could wish those who know nothing of politics but what they have from books, would endeavor to keep in their remembrance these verses of Corneille's:

Les exemples récens suffiraient pour m'instruire;
Si par l'exemple seul on devait se conduire;
Mais souvent l'un se perd où l'autre s'est sauvé,
Et par où l'un périt un autre est conservé.

Recent examples would suffice to instruct, if we were to direct our conduct by example only, but often one man is lost where another is saved, and what is one man's ruin is another's salvation.

Henry VIII., who tyrannized over his parliaments, his ministers, and his wives, and indeed over the purses and consciences of his people, lived and died in peace; whereas the good and brave Charles I. lost his life on a scaffold. Our admirable heroine,

Margaret of Anjou, gives battle twelve different times to the English, the subjects of her husband, but in vain. William III. expels James II. from his kingdom, in a manner, without drawing the sword. In our own days, we have seen the imperial family of Persia cut off, and aliens seat themselves on their throne. For such as look no further than events, history seems to be an accusation of providence, and those beautiful fables to be its justification. One thing is evident, which is, that in these we find the useful and the pleasing happily blended. Those who are able to contribute nothing of either are they who declaim against fables. Let us leave such folks alone to rail till they are weary; and, in the meantime, we will sometimes read Ovid, as well as Titus Livius, and Rapin Thoiras. It is good taste which gives the preference, while the contrary conduct is that of a gloomy and an ill-natured fanaticism.

Tous les Arts sont amis, ainsi qu'ils sont divins:
Qui veut les séparer est loin de les connaître.
L'histoire nous apprend ce que sont les humains;
La fable ce qu'ils doivent être.

The union of the arts is as evident as their divine origin; and he who attempts to separate them knows little of them. History teaches us what mankind are; fable what they should be.

ON WIT.

A PERSON who had a competent knowledge of the human heart, being asked his opinion of a tragedy that was about to be performed, made answer that there was such a deal of wit in the piece that he very much doubted of its success. "What!" says one, "can that be a fault in an age in which everyone aims at being witty, and writes only to show that he is so; and in which the public applauds even the falsest thoughts, provided they are brilliant ones?" "Most assuredly; they will applaud it one day, and condemn it the next."

What is commonly called wit is sometimes a new simile, and sometimes a delicate allusion. In one place, it is the abuse of a word, which is offered to the reader under one sense, and which he is to understand in one quite different. Now it is a delicate relation between two uncommon ideas; then it is an extraordinary metaphor; a search after something that an object does not present at first sight, but that yet may be found in it; the art either of uniting two things naturally very distant, or of dividing two things which seem naturally connected, or to place them in apposition to each other; that of saying only half one's thoughts, that the reader may have the pleasure to find out the other half himself: in short, I should mention all the different ways of making our wit known, had I more of it myself: yet all these brilliants — for I do not speak of mock brilliants — are very seldom,

if ever, sufferable in a serious work, or in such as ought to interest us. The reason is, that it is then the author who appears, whereas the public desires never to see any person but the hero. Now this hero is always either in a passion or in danger. Neither danger nor passion seeks after wit. Priam and Hecuba would not have made epigrams when Troy was in flames, and their children butchered before their faces. Dido does not vent her sighs in madrigals, while running toward the funeral pile on which she is to give herself the fatal blow. Demosthenes does not make use of pretty thoughts when he is stirring up the Athenians to war; had he done so, he had been a rhetorician, or a declaimer, whereas he was a statesman.

The art of the admirable Racine is infinitely beyond what is called wit; but had Pyrrhus always expressed himself in such a style as this:

Vaincu, chargé de fers, de regrets consumé,
Brûlé de plus de feux que je n'en allumai.
Hélas! fus-je jamais si cruel que vous l'êtes?

A fettered captive, and a vanquished wretch,
A prey to all the pangs of heart-felt grief,
Burning with flames more fierce than those my rage
Kindled in falling Troy; say, was I e'er
So cruel, so obdurate as thou art?

Or was Orestes continually crying:

Que les Scythes sont moins cruels qu' Hermione.

E'en savage Scythians are more gentle far
Than is Hermione.

These two characters had never produced any effect on the audience: they would have perceived

that passion, which is real, very rarely amuses itself with such comparisons, and that there is very little connection between the flames which consumed Troy, and those of Pyrrhus; between the Scythians, who offered up human victims, and Hermione, who had no passion for Orestes. Cinna, speaking of Pompey, says:

Le Ciel choisit sa mort, pour servir dignement,
D'une marque éternelle à ce grand changement;
Et devait cet honneur aux Mânes d'un tel homme,
D'emporter avec eux la liberté de Rome.

His death was fixed on by the righteous gods,
As the most glorious mark, the surest monument,
To latest ages, of this wondrous change:
Resolved, in honor to the hero's shade,
That Roman freedom should with him expire.

This thought is certainly very splendid; there is a great deal of wit in it, and even a certain grandeur which dazzles at first sight. I am sure these verses, pronounced with that enthusiasm of expression, and the address of an able actor, could not fail of applause; but I am also sure that were the tragedy of "Cinna" to be all written in the same taste, it would not have been performed for any length of time. And, to speak the truth, why should heaven resolve to do honor to Pompey by making his countrymen slaves after his death? The contrary had been much more consistent with probability; and the name of Pompey ought rather to have endeavored to obtain of heaven the perpetuating that liberty for which we suppose he both fought and died.

What must a work, filled with such paradoxes and far-fetched thoughts, really be? How superior to all these dazzling ideas are such simple and natural verses as these?

Cinna, tu t'en souviens, et veux m'assassiner!
Soyons amis, Cinna, c'est moi qui t'en convie.

This, Cinna, thou rememberest, and wouldst kill me!
Yet we'll be friends; it is Augustus asks it.

This is by no means what is called wit; it is the sublime and the simple, in the union of which two qualities all true beauty consists.

When Antiochus, in "Rodogune," speaking of his mistress who leaves him, after having made him the base proposal to murder his mother, says:

Elle fuit, mais en Parthe, en nous perçant le cœur.

She flies, but, like the Parthian, flying wounds.

Antiochus is assuredly very witty; this is really composing an epigram on Rodogune; he makes a very ingenious comparison between the last words she utters on her going away, and the arrows which the Parthians, in their flight, shot back against their pursuers. But it is not his mistress' leaving him, but the proposal of killing his mother, which is shocking; whether Rodogune went or stayed, Antiochus is equally lovesick; but if she had not gone away, there would have been no room for this wretched epigram.

I have chosen to draw these examples from the best authors, on purpose that they might on that account have the greater weight. I omit pointing out the trivial points, and the playing on words,

whereof we easily discover the blemish. There is no person who does not burst out in a fit of laughter when, in the "Golden Fleece," Hypsipyle says to Medea, alluding to her enchantments:

Je n'ai que des attraits, et vous avez des charmes.

I have but beauty, you're possessed of charms.

Corneille found the theatre, and indeed every species of composition, infected with such puerilities, in which he very rarely indulges himself. I have no intention in this place to take notice of any strokes of wit, but such only as might be omitted elsewhere, and which are altogether faulty in the serious. We might apply to the authors who make use of them these words of Plutarch, as they are translated by Amiot, with the simplicity peculiar to him: "*Tu tiens sans propos, beaucoup de bons propos.*"

I remember to have seen one of these splendid thoughts quoted as a model in many works of taste, and even in the late M. Rollin's "Treatise on Study." This passage is extracted from that beautiful funeral oration on the great Turenne, composed by Fléchier. It is true, Fléchier in this oration almost equals the sublime Bossuet, whom I have formerly called, and still do call, the eloquent person among so many elegant writers; but I am of opinion the passage I am speaking of would hardly have been made sense of by the bishop of Meaux. It is this:

Puissances, ennemies de la France, vous vivez, et l'esprit de la charité Chrétienne m'interdit de faire aucun souhait pour votre mort, etc. Mais vous vivez: et je plains dans

cette chaire un vertueux Capitaine dont les intentions étaient pures, etc.

Ye powers, enemies to France, you yet survive, and the spirit of Christian charity forbids me to form a wish for your deaths, etc. Yes, you survive, while I appear in this place to perform the mournful office of lamenting a virtuous general, whose intentions were undefiled and pure, etc.

Such an apostrophe might have been seasonable enough at Rome, in the time of the civil war after the murder of Pompey, or in London after that of Charles I., as the subject then would have related to the interests of Pompey and Charles I. But is it consistent with decency artfully to express from the pulpit a wish for the death of the emperor, the king of Spain, and the electors, and to put them in the balance with the general of a king with whom they were then at war? Ought the intentions of a captain, which could only be the serving his prince, to be compared with the political interests of crowned heads, against whom he was employed? What should we have said of a German who should have wished for the death of the king of France, because Count Merci, whose intentions were pure, happened to be killed? Why then has this passage been commended on every occasion by all the rhetoricians? The reason is, that this figure is naturally beautiful and pathetic; but they forget to examine the substance and fitness of the sentiment it contained. Plutarch would have told Fléchier: *Tu as tenu sans propos, un très beau propos.*

I return to the paradox I have been advancing; that all those glittering thoughts to which men have

given the appellation of wit, ought never to have been admitted into great works, composed for the instruction of the public, or calculated to move the passions. I would not even stick to say, they ought to be banished from our operas. Music expresses the passions, the sentiments, and the images: but what accents are able to express an epigram? Quinault has formerly been sometimes neglected, yet he was always natural.

Of all our operas, that which is the most loaded with ornaments, or rather filled with this affectation of epigram, is the *"Ballet du Triomphe des Arts,"* composed by a very worthy person, who thought always in a very delicate and ingenious manner, and who expressed himself with equal elegance; but who, by the abuse of this talent, has contributed somewhat to the downfall of letters, after those happy days under Louis XIV. In this ballad, where Pygmalion gives life to his statue, he tells her:

Vos premiers mouvemens ont été de m'aimer.

And your first movements were of love to me.

I remember to have heard this verse admired in my youth by certain persons. But who does not perceive that the motions of the body of the statue are here confounded with the motions of the heart, and that in no sense this phrase makes good French? But is a point a mere witticism? How is it possible a person who had so much wit should yet want sense to retrench those florid and dazzling faults? The man who despised and translated Homer, and in

his translation thought he corrected him, and who, by abridging him, thought he had made him possible to be read, takes it into his head likewise to make Homer witty. This person, while he makes Achilles seemingly reconciled to the Greeks, who are now ready to avenge his quarrel, makes the whole camp cry out:

Que ne vaincra-t-il point? il s'est vaincu lui-même.

He sure must conquer who subdued himself.

He must have been deeply in love with this false wit to cause an army of fifty thousand men to express themselves by a point.

This play of the imagination, these pretty turns, these conceits, these gayeties, these short smart sentences, these ingenious familiar expressions, men are so prodigal of at present, are only proper for trivial works, which are calculated for mere amusement. The part of the Louvre by Perrault is at once simple and majestic. A cabinet may admit of little ornaments. Be as witty as you please, or even as you can be, in light copies of verses, in a scene of a comedy, that is neither filled with passion, nor what we call simple nature, in a compliment, in some short novel, or in a letter in which you would communicate your good humor to your friend.

Far from finding fault with Voiture for admitting wit into his letters, I am, on the contrary, of opinion, that he is not witty enough, though he was eternally straining after it. Dancing-masters are said to make a bow with the worst grace of any

people, because they aim at doing it better than anybody else. I fancy this is exactly Voiture's case. His best letters are studied; we perceive it has cost him a great deal of labor to find out what offers itself of its own accord to Count Anthony Hamilton, to Madame de Sévigné, and to many other ladies, who write such trifles with the greatest ease, better than Voiture could with prodigious efforts. Despréaux, who ventured to compare Voiture to Horace, in his first satires, changed his opinion, after his taste had been ripened by age. I know it is of small importance to mankind whether he is or is not of an elevated genius; whether he has written only a few letters that can be called pretty, or whether all his pleasantry ought to pass for so many models. But persons who love and cultivate the arts are often particularly careful in examining what the rest of the world is apt to look on with the greatest indifference. Taste is, to the full, as necessary to us in the pursuit of literature as it is to the ladies in matters of dress; and provided we do not make our opinions a party affair, methinks we may boldly say that there are few things that can be called excellent in Voiture, and that Marot might very easily be reduced to a few pages.

I would not, from what I have said, be understood as desiring to derogate from the reputation they have acquired; on the contrary, I would endeavor to let it be known exactly by what means they have acquired the reputation they enjoy, and what those true beauties are which have, in some measure, made their faults pass uncensured. We

ought to know what is worthy our imitation, and what we ought to shun; and this is properly what ought to be the fruit of a careful study of the belles-lettres. This is the conduct Horace pursued when he examined Lucius like a true critic. Horace, by so doing, made himself enemies; but even his enemies were improved by the instructions he gave them.

This desire to shine, and to say what has been already said by others, after a new manner, is the source of novelty in expressions, as it is of far-fetched thoughts. An author who is incapable of shining by a thought, would make himself taken notice of by an expression. This is the reason why it has been lately attempted to substitute *amabilités* instead of *agrémens, négligemment* for *négligence, badiner les amours* in place of *badiner avec les amours.* There are a hundred such affected expressions. Were we to continue corrupting the language in this manner, that spoken by Bossuet, Racine, Pascal, Corneille, Boileau, and Fénelon would soon become obsolete. Why reject an expression which is in use, to make room for another signifying exactly the same thing? A new word is pardonable only when it is absolutely necessary, intelligible, and sonorous; we are under a necessity of coining such in physics: a new discovery, or a new machine demands a new term. But are there any new discoveries made in the human heart? Is there any other sublimity than that of Corneille and Bossuet? Are there any other passions besides those which have been treated by Racine, or excited by

Quinault? Is there any gospel of morality different from that of Bourdaloue?

Those who condemn our language as not being sufficiently copious, may be supposed to have met with something like sterility; but then it is in themselves: "*Rem verba sequuntur.*" When we are full of any idea, when a just and warm imagination fully possesses a thought, it then issues from the brain, ready arrayed in proper expressions, in the same manner as Minerva sprang fully armed from that of Jupiter. I am sensible this simile might justly seem misplaced, at least in another work; but you will pardon it in a letter. In a word, the conclusion I draw from what has been said is, that we must not seek after either thoughts, turns, or expressions; and that art, in every great work, consists in reasoning justly, but without making use of too many arguments; in painting well, but without painting everything; in moving the passions, but without being always endeavoring to shake the soul. Here is certainly a world of good counsel; but have I always followed the doctrine I preach? Alas! no —

Pauci, quos æquus amavit
Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad æthera virtus,
Diis geniti potuere.

FRAGMENT OF A LETTER

ON A VERY USEFUL CUSTOM WHICH PREVAILS IN HOLLAND.

It is to be wished that those who govern nations would imitate artists. As soon as it is known in London that a new stuff is made in France, they are sure to counterfeit it. Why is not a statesman equally desirous to establish in his own country a salutary law taken from a foreign nation? We have arrived, at length, at the secret of making chinaware of an equal goodness to that made in China. Let us learn the secret of imitating the good we observe practised among our neighbors, and let our neighbors profit by what they see excellent among us.

There are private persons who raise in their gardens the fruits which nature had appointed only to ripen under the line. We have a thousand wise laws, and a thousand excellent customs at our very doors; these are the fruits we ought to raise in our country; these are the trees we ought to transplant: they will thrive in every climate, and will prosper in every soil. The most salutary law, the most excellent custom, and the most useful I have ever seen is in Holland. When two persons are about to enter on a lawsuit, they are first obliged to go before a tribunal of reconciling judges, called the Peacemakers. If the parties happen to bring with them a lawyer and a counsellor, the first thing done is to send those gentlemen about their business, as we take off the wood from a fire we want to

extinguish. The Peacemakers tell the parties: "You are certainly great fools to spend your money to procure your own ruin; we will bring you to an agreement without costing you one farthing." If the rage of chicane happens to be too violent in our parties, they put them off to another day, in order that time may soften and mitigate the symptoms of their disorder; after the expiration of which time the judges summon them before them a second and a third time. If their folly is of the incurable sort, they promise them they will consent to their having their cause tried in a court of justice, in the same manner as we abandon an incurable member to the surgeon; and then the law has its course.

There is no necessity to make long declamations, or to calculate how much it would be for the advantage of humanity, were this law universally adopted. And besides, I am by no means desirous to follow the footsteps of the abbé de St. Pierre, whose projects a certain minister, and a man of sense, called "The dreams of a worthy man." I know that if a private person of integrity and good sense offers a proposal for the public good, it too often happens that he is abused or laughed at for his pains. "What meddling fellow is this," some will say, "who pretends to make us happier than we choose to be, and goes about to reform abuses by which so many people get their living?" What reply can be made to this? For my part, I know of none.

THE PROFESSION OF LETTERS.

YOUR vocation, my dear Lefèvre, is too plainly marked out by nature to be able to resist it. The bee must needs make honey, the silkworm spin, M. Réaumur must dissect them, and you sing their labors. You will be a poet and a man of letters, not so much by your own choice as by that of nature. But you are much deceived in thinking that tranquillity will be your lot. The road of literature, and, above all, of genius, is yet more thorny than that of fortune. If you have the misfortune to be only an indifferent poet, which I am far from believing, there is nothing before you but repentance while you live. If you succeed, you are then sure to be surrounded with enemies; in a word, you walk on the brink of a precipice, with contempt on one hand, and hatred on the other.

"But what," you will tell me, "can it be possible I should be hated and persecuted merely for having written a good poem, a play that has had a run, or compiled a history with approbation, or for having sought to improve my own mind, or to contribute to the instruction of others?" But, admitting you have composed an excellent work, are you aware that you must abandon the repose of your study, in order to make your application to the licencer? If his way of thinking happens to differ from yours, if he chances not to be your friend's friend, if he is in the interest of your rival, or if he is your rival himself, it will be more difficult for you to obtain a

privilege, than for a man who has not the protection of the women to get a place at court. At length, after a year spent in applications and refusals, your work is printed; then it is you are obliged either to lay the Cerberuses of literature asleep, or engage them to bark in your favor. There are always three or four literary gazettes in France, as many in Holland; these are so many different factions. The booksellers, whose property these journals are, have an interest in their being satirical; and those who write in them are easily brought to humor the avarice of the bookseller, and the ill-nature of the public. Are you desirous to set these trumpets of fame sounding, do you pay your court to writers, patrons, abbés, doctors, and hawkers; all your cares will not avail, but some journalist or other will mangle your reputation. You answer him; he replies; you have a paper war carried on before the public, who condemns both parties alike to ridicule.

The matter is still worse if you happen to write for the stage; you begin with appearing before the areopagus of a score of pleaders, a body whose profession, though both useful and diverting, is, notwithstanding, sullied by the unjust but irrevocable cruelty of the public. This unhappy state of contempt in which they are, irritates them. In you they behold a client, and lavish on you all that contempt with which they themselves are covered. You await your doom from them; they sit in judgment on your merits; and, at length, undertake to perform your piece. One foolish wit in the pit is

enough to damn all your hopes. Does it succeed? That farce, called the "Italian Comedy," that of the Foire, will parody you; and a swarm of libels are published to prove to you that you should not in justice have met with any success. Some of the pretenders to learning, who neither understand Greek, nor read what is published in French, despise, or, at least, affect to despise you.

You carry your book to some lady of the court, and, as you go, tremble for fear she should give it to her woman, who will make papers for her hair of it; and the lackey, all bedaubed with lace, who is keeper of the book of luxury, insults your dress, which is the livery of indigence.

In short, I will suppose that the fame of your works may have forced envy herself sometimes to acknowledge you are not without your share of merit. This is the utmost you can expect while living; but you will pay dearly for this condescension, and have nothing to look for but perpetual persecution. You will have libels imputed to you, which you have never so much as read; verses for which you entertain the most sovereign contempt; and sentiments to which you are an utter stranger: you will be compelled to espouse a party, or else have all parties unite in a body against you.

There are in Paris a number of those little societies, in which some woman presides, who, in the decline of her beauty, begins to exhibit the first dawning of her wit. One or two of the men of letters are the first members of this little kingdom. Should you neglect getting yourself admitted in

quality of a courtier, you are sure of being held as a declared enemy, and are accordingly allowed no quarter. In the meanwhile, in spite of all your merit, you grow old in the midst of slander and wretchedness; those places which are destined for men of letters, are given to those who can best cabal, and not to those who are only recommended by their talents: and some pedagogue, by means of his pupil's mother, shall obtain a place to which you dare not so much as lift up your eyes; and the parasite of some courtier carry an employ from you for which you are extremely well qualified.

Should chance lead you into one of those companies in which some one of the authors who have been damned by the public happens to be, or one of those half-learned, who has not even merit sufficient to be ranked among the middling authors, but who has a place, or who may have thrust himself into some public office; you will soon perceive by the superiority which he affects to have over you, that you are in the very lowest class of mankind.

After forty years' labor, you resolve to seek, by means of intriguing, after what is never given to merit alone, and you make interest, as others do, to be admitted into the French Academy, and to be allowed to pronounce with a hesitating voice, at your reception, a compliment, which next day will be forgotten forever. This French Academy is the secret object of the vows of every man of letters; it is a mistress against whom they are perpetually making songs and epigrams, till they have obtained

her favors, and whom they neglect the next moment after fruition.

It is no wonder they should be desirous of being admitted into a society in which there are always some persons of merit, and from whom they expect, though with little reason, to find protection. But you may perhaps ask me, why people say all the ill-natured things in their power against this body, till such time as they become members of it, and why the public, which shows sufficient respect to the Academy of Sciences, uses so little ceremony with the French Academy. The reason is, that the works of the French Academy are exposed to the view of the public, whereas those of the other are covered with a veil. Every Frenchman thinks he knows the language, and piques himself on his taste; but they rarely value themselves on being thought natural philosophers. The mathematics will always be a kind of mystery to the bulk of the nation, and consequently will always be an object of veneration. Algebraic equations afford no matter either for an epigram, for a song, or for envy; but people judge with the utmost severity those enormous collections of indifferent verses, harangues, and panegyrics which are sometimes as false as the eloquence with which they are accompanied. We are sorry to see the device of " Immortality " at the head of so many declamations, which promise nothing that is likely to last forever, but that oblivion to which they are condemned.

It is most certain that the French Academy might serve to fix the taste of the nation, as will appear

by reading their remarks on the "Cid;" the jealousy of Cardinal Richelieu has, at least, had this good effect. A few works of this kind would be of very great service. We have looked for such these hundred years from the only body from whom they can proceed with any decorum or advantage. Complaints have been made that half the academicians consist of noblemen who never assist at their meetings, and that, among the remaining half, there are hardly to be found above nine or ten who give constant attendance. The Academy is often neglected by its own members; and yet no sooner does one of the forty die, but new candidates appear; a vacant bishopric could not occasion more caballing; they ride post to Versailles; all the women are set to work as well as all the bustling people; every spring is put in motion; and often the only fruit of these negotiations is the making of enemies; the chief cause of those horrible couplets which have forever undone the celebrated but unfortunate Rousseau, were owing to his failing of the place which he solicited in the Academy. Are you so fortunate as to carry the preference over all your rivals, your felicity presently dwindles to a mere phantom; do you meet with a disappointment, your affliction is then real. One might write these verses on the tomb of most men of letters:

Ci gît au bord de l'Hippocrène,
Un mortel longtems abusé.
Pour vivre pauvre et méprisé,
Il se donna bien de la peine.

Here lies, by the Castalian brook,
A victim to the love of fame,
A world of pains this poet took
To live in poverty and shame.

What, then, is the drift of this long sermon I have been making? Can it be to deter you from the pursuit of the road of literature? I will not so much oppose the course of destiny; all I mean by this is only to exhort you to patience.

A FRAGMENT

ON THE CAUSES OF THE CORRUPTION OF STYLE.

IT is a general complaint that eloquence is corrupted, though we have models in almost all the kinds. One of the grand defects of the present age, and which has most contributed to this decline, is the mixture of styles. It would seem we authors do not enough imitate the painters, who make it a constant rule never to join the attitudes of Callot to the figures of Raphael. I have seen some histories, in other respects well enough written, and even good dogmatical pieces, composed in the style of the most familiar conversation. Someone has somewhere said we ought to write as we speak; the meaning of which is certainly this, that we ought to write naturally. Irregularity, with licence, incorrectness, and even a hazarded stroke of wit, may be tolerated in a letter; because a letter, which is supposed to be written without study or design, is of course an easy and careless composition; but when we speak or write with an idea of respect, we are then obliged to confine ourselves within the limits of decorum. Now, I ask whether there is anything more deserving of respect than the public.

Is it allowable to say, in a mathematical work, "that a geometrician, who would make sure of his salvation, ought to mount up to heaven in a perpendicular line; that evanescent quantities fall to the ground from their ambition of ascending too high; that a seed that has been sown with the wrong

end in the ground is sensible of the trick that has been played it, and therefore rises again in an upright posture; that were Saturn to perish, it would be his fifth and not his first satellite that would fill his place, because kings always keep their immediate heirs at a distance; that there is no vacuum in nature but in the pocket of a bankrupt; that Hercules was a natural philosopher, and that to resist a philosopher of his strength was a thing impossible?"

There are very excellent books infected with this blemish; the source of this so common a fault proceeds, in my opinion, from that reproach of pedantry that has long been made to authors, and with abundance of justice. "*In vitium ducit culpæ fuga.*" It has been so often rung in people's ears, that they ought to write in the language of the best company, that the gravest authors are grown witty; and, in order to pass with their readers for one accustomed to see good company, they say things worthy of the very worst sort of company.

They have attempted to treat of the sciences, in the same tone as Voiture talked to Mademoiselle Paulet about gallantry, without reflecting that Voiture himself has not hit the true taste of this light way of writing, in which he was thought to have excelled; for he often mistook the false for the delicate, as he did the affected style for the natural. Pleasantry is never good in the serious, because it glances only on that side of objects on which it is never viewed by the public; it turns almost perpetually on false relations, or on equivocal meanings;

from whence it comes that those who set up for professed wits have commonly judgments equally false and superficial.

I should think we ought as little to mix styles in poetry as in prose. That style which is called Marotic has lately corrupted our poetry a little, by that extravagant mingling of expressions, at the same time creeping and noble, obsolete and modern; we sometimes, in pieces of morality, hear the squeaking of Rabelais's whistle blended with the softness of Horace's flute.

Il faut parler français: Boileau n'eut qu'un langage:
Son esprit était juste, et son style était sage.
Sers-toi de ses leçons; laisse aux esprits mal faits
L'art de moraliser du ton de Rabelais.

We should speak French. Boileau had but one language. His wit was pointed, his style grave and decent; observe his rules, and leave to left-handed wits the unenvied art of moralizing in the gross style of Rabelais.

I confess I was shocked to meet with the following expressions in a serious epistle:

Des rimeurs disloqués, à qui le cerveau tinte,
Plus amers qu'aloès, et jus de coloquinte,
Vices portant méchef. Gens de tel acabit,
Chiffoniers, Ostrogots, maroufles que Dieu fit.
De tous ces termes bas l'entassement facile
Déshonore à la fois le génie et la style.

TO A CERTAIN UPPER CLERK.

June 20, 1733.

SIR: Since you are in a situation which enables you to do some service to the belles-lettres, let me entreat you not to clip so close the wings of our writers, nor reduce to the condition of barn-door fowls those who, by using their best efforts, might one day become eagles; a decent freedom elevates the mind, whilst a state of slavery renders it degenerate and abject. Had there been a literary inquisition at Rome, we had neither had a Horace, nor a Juvenal, nor even the philosophical works of Cicero. Had Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Locke not been free, England had been without either poets or philosophers; there is a certain Turkish despotism in proscribing the press; and to confine it too much is equal to a prohibition. Be satisfied with laying defamatory libels under the severest restraint, because such productions as these are real crimes. But whilst men openly publish such monstrous collections of the most infamous ribaldry, and so many other pieces, equally deserving our horror and contempt, permit Bayle, at least, to make his appearance in France, and let not the works of a person who has done so much honor to our country be rated as contraband.

You may perhaps tell me, that the magistrates who manage the literary custom-house complain that there are too many books. This is much the same as if the provost of the merchants in Paris should

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say there were too many commodities at market. Let him buy that wants. An immense library is like the city of Paris, which contains very near eight hundred thousand souls: now, you do not associate with all this prodigious multitude; you choose out some select company, agreeable to your taste and inclinations, and you change it whenever you grow tired of it. Books are used in much the same manner: we choose out some, by way of friends, from the multitude. There will still be seven or eight hundred thousand books of controversy, and from fifteen to sixteen thousand romances, which you will never read; with a world of loose periodical papers, which you may read once, and then throw into the fire. A man of taste reads only the excellent authors; but a good statesman will tolerate both kinds.

The thoughts of men are become an important object in commerce. The booksellers in Holland gain a million yearly because Frenchmen formerly had wit. A middling romance is, as I am perfectly well assured, among books, what a fool, who would be thought a man of imagination, is in the world: people laugh at him, but yet they put up with him. This romance gives bread to the author who has composed it, to the bookseller who vends it, together with the typefounder, printer, bookbinder, hawker, and, lastly, the retailer of execrable wine, with whom all those gentlemen lay out their money. This work will moreover serve for two or three hours' amusement to a few women, with whom novelty is the most essential quality in books, as it is in every-

thing else. Thus, contemptible as it is, it has produced two things of vast importance, profit and pleasure.

Shows, moreover, merit still greater attention; I do not consider them as an employment which takes young people from debauchery; this notion is fit for such a one as an ignorant curate. There is time enough, both before and after shows, to enjoy the few moments which are commonly bestowed on transitory pleasures, immediately followed by disgust. Besides, men do not go to shows every day; and among the vast multitudes of citizens, there are not four thousand persons who attend them constantly.

I consider tragedy and comedy as so many schools of virtue, reason, and decorum. Corneille, who may really be called an ancient Roman living in France, has founded a school wherein noble sentiments are taught; and Molière an academy wherein are explained the duties of civil life. Those geniuses which they have formed draw strangers from the remotest parts of Europe, who come to receive instructions among us, and who contribute to the opulence of Paris. Our poor are fed by the produce of these works, which have gained us an empire over those very nations who have a natural hatred to us. The whole being well considered, a man must be an enemy to his country to condemn our shows. A magistrate, in right of having bought at a high price the office of a judge, has the audaciousness to think that it is indecent in him to go to see "Cinna:"

such a person may have a great deal of gravity, but surely is possessed of a very small share of taste.

There will always be, in this polite nation of ours, minds which naturally have a tincture of the Goth and Vandal; but I can only acknowledge those who love and encourage the arts as true Frenchmen. This taste, it is true, begins to sink amongst us; we are, like the Sybarites, weary of the favors of our mistresses: we enjoy the vigils of these great men, whose labors serve for our amusement, as well as for that of ages yet unborn, just as we receive the productions of nature. They will tell us they are due to us; it is but a hundred years since we fed on acorns; yet those Triptolemuses, who have given us the finest wheat, are become indifferent to us; nothing awakens this spirit of indolence and indifference for great objects, which is an inseparable companion of our vivacity and eagerness for trifles.

We discover every year more industry and invention in our snuff-boxes, our tweezer-cases, and such trinkets than the English have made use of to obtain the empire of the seas, to cause water to ascend by means of fire, and to calculate the aberration of light. The ancient Romans raised wonders in architecture for their spectacles of wild beasts; yet have we not for an age past been able to build a tolerable receptacle for the masterpieces of the human mind? The hundredth part of our card-money would be sufficient to build places for our shows more pompous than the theatre of Pompey: but where is the man in Paris who is fired with the smallest spark of love for his country? We game, sup, and like

scandal, compose wretched songs, and fall asleep in the hands of stupidity, in order to awake next day to renew the same circle of levity and indifference. You, sir, who hold at least a small place, which gives you an opportunity of giving wholesome counsel, do you endeavor to rouse men from this barbarous lethargy, and be a benefactor, if you can, to the commonwealth of letters, which has been so great a benefactor to France.

OF A REMARKABLE CIRCUMSTANCE RELATING TO LITERATURE.

THE principal end of our historical essays being to follow the human mind in the various progresses it has made, and the obstacles it has had to encounter, I cannot justly omit a kind of persecution which the learned have of late undergone. The body of *literati* begins to challenge much more attention than any of the religious orders, whose disputes we have related, as its members are spread throughout all nations. Those who are distinguished by their superior knowledge and understanding insensibly govern others almost without perceiving it themselves, or exercising the prerogatives of that empire they have acquired over the mind; prerogatives which are held so dear by all bodies in the state. This secret authority, which good writers obtain, has always been an eyesore to those who have in vain attempted to usurp it.

A set of men, of great genius and true erudition, which cannot subsist without true philosophy, undertook, in 1652, to compile an immense dictionary of human knowledge, whose limits some among them had contributed greatly to enlarge. This undertaking met with the approbation and encouragement of all Europe, and the work itself became an important article of trade.

Several volumes had already appeared, which had given great satisfaction to the public; especially those articles which were written by the persons who

had the chief management of the work. The book was published with all the necessary forms that could insure its sale. The subscribers of all countries, who had advanced their money, thought it perfectly safe under the authority of the king's own seal, and expected to reap the profits of their subscription without any difficulty; for though the authors of this work intended it as a free gift to the human understanding it was considered by the subscribers and booksellers as a kind of bargain in trade, which should have been duly fulfilled.

Envy, however, at length broke loose, and was quickly seconded by fanaticism. These two eternal foes to reason and learning moved the Parliament of Paris against this Dictionary, which, in itself, was by no means an object of judicial inquiry; and besides, by being licenced under the royal signet, seemed to be secured against any attempts.

The Jesuits were the first who began the attack, in which they spared no pains to vilify this noble work, because they had applied for their body to have the doing of the theological articles, and had been refused. They little thought at that time that they themselves would ere long be condemned by the very courts whom they endeavored to incense against the "Encyclopædia."

The Jansenists effected what the Jesuits had begun; they found that those who had dedicated their labors to this work made impartiality their fundamental law; and consequently could be friends to neither Jesuits nor Jansenists, and that having devoted themselves wholly to investigate and repre-

sent truth, they would raise an aversion in mankind to fanaticism.

These two parties, who were most deadly enemies to each other, joined together on this occasion like banditti — if I may be allowed the comparison — who suspended their private quarrels to share in a general plunder. They put on the usual mask of religion and represented several of the articles as impious and heretical; and, by a refinement in wickedness, not exampled even in the greatest rage of religious controversies, finding that they could not attack with any success those articles in the "Encyclopædia" which most disgusted them, they pretended that the referring of one head, or article, to a future one was done with a design to fill the last volumes of this work with a poison which was not to be found in the first; they likewise inveighed against other theological articles, which were found to be perfectly orthodox, merely from a supposition that they were written by those persons whom they wanted to destroy.

But how could the parliament find time to try seven large volumes in folio already printed, and prejudge those that were not yet published? The prosecutors put their memorial into the hands of the attorney-general, who had still less leisure to examine this prodigious collection of arts and sciences, which no one single person can possibly comprehend.

Unhappily this lawyer gave credit to the malicious calumnies contained in the memorial he had received, and drew up his report accordingly. The article on

"The Soul" was particularly attacked in these memorials, as it was supposed to have been written by those whom they were desirous to render suspected. This article was represented as tending to establish the doctrine of materialism; upon inquiry, it was found to be a doctor of the Sorbonne, who was well known for his orthodox principles, and who, instead of being a favorite of materialism had opposed it even so far as to contradict the opinion of the great Locke with more piety than philosophy. This very extraordinary blunder was soon made known to the public, but not till after the parliament had passed an arret, appointing commissioners to make amendments in the work, and prohibiting the sale thereof in the meantime. However, the public still remained in hopes that it would at length be indulged with this work, which it wished for the more impatiently on account of the opposition it had met with.

This very singular anecdote, in the history of the human mind, which seemed a revival of the arrets that had been issued against Aristotle's "Categories," may serve to show us that every profession should keep within its own proper bounds, and that the civil law should not molest philosophy.

It would, however, have been very happy for the government had it experienced no other disputes but of this kind, which are only inconveniences and not disasters; nay, these slight perplexities, which have their source in the improvement of learning, and can never happen among an illiterate people, form a kind of panegyric on the age, which, however, it would be better if we could do without.

DISCOURSE ADDRESSED TO THE WELSH.[1]

Oh Welsh! my countrymen, if you surpass the ancient Greeks and Romans, never bite the bosom of your nurses, never insult your masters, be modest in your triumphs; consider who you are, and from whom you descend.

It is true you had the honor to be subdued by Julius Cæsar, who caused all the members of your Parliament of Vannes to be hanged, sold the remainder of the inhabitants, ordered the hands of the inhabitants of Quercy to be cut off, and then governed you with great mildness. You remained for more than five hundred years subject to the laws of the Roman Empire: your Druids, who treated you as slaves and animals, who piously burned you in osier baskets, no longer retained their influence when you became a province of the Roman Empire. But honestly confess that you were always somewhat barbarous.

In the fifth age of your vulgar era, Vandals, to whom you gave the sonorous appellation of Bourgonsions, or Bourguignons, people of great genius, and extremely cleanly, who rubbed their hair with strong butter, to use the phrase of Sidonius Apollinaris, *"infundens acido comam butiro;"* these people, I say, made you all slaves, from the territory of your town of Vienne to the source of your river

[1] A satire on his own countrymen.

Seine; and it is one of the remaining customs of that illustrious age, for monks and canons to have vassals in this country. This fine prerogative of the human species subsists among you as a testimony of your wisdom.

One part of your remaining provinces, which you so long called the provinces of Oc, and which you so nobly distinguished from the provinces of Oui, were invaded by the Visigoths: and as to your provinces of Oui, they were taken from you by a Sicambrian named Clovis, whose ancestors had been condemned to be devoured by wild beasts at Trier, by the emperor Constantine. This Sicambrian, dignified with the title of the Roman Patrician, reduced you to slavery with a handful of Franks, who came out of the marshes of the Rhine, the Main, and the Meuse. The noble exploits of this great man were the assassinations of three petty kings, his friends and relations, one near the town of Boulogne upon the sea, the other near the village of Cambray, and the third near the village of Mans, which your chronicles call cities: it was at that time that the Welsh country had the melodious name of Frankreich, the ancient name of France, in commemoration of its conquerors; and you were the first nation of the world, for you had the standard of St. Denis.

Northern pirates came some time after to pillage you, and took from you the province which has been since called Normandy. You were afterward divided into many different nations under different masters, and each nation had its peculiar laws, as well as its peculiar jargon.

One-half of your country soon belonged to the inhabitants of the island called Britain, or England, in their idiom, which was then as harmonious as yours. Normandy, Brittany, Anjou, Maine, Saintonge, Guienne, Gascony, Angoumois, Périgord, Rouergue, and Auvergne were a long time in the hands of this people, the Angles; while you had neither Lyons, nor Marseilles, nor Dauphiny, nor Provence, nor Languedoc.

Notwithstanding this your miserable situation, your compilers, whom you take for historians, often call you "the first people of the earth," and your kingdom "the first kingdom." This is treating other nations somewhat impolitely. You are a brilliant and amiable people; and if you add modesty to your graces, the rest of Europe will be highly pleased with you.

Return your hearty thanks to God for delivering you from the Angles, by the factions of the red and white roses; and above all, return thanks that the civil wars of Germany prevented Charles V. from swallowing up your country, and making it a province of the empire.

You had a brilliant moment under Louis XIV., but don't for that reason think yourselves superior in everything to the ancient Romans and Greeks.

Consider that during the space of six hundred years scarcely anybody among you, except a few of your new Druids, could either read or write. Your excessive ignorance gave you up to the Flamen of Rome and his associates, like children, whom pedagogues govern and correct as they think proper.

Your contracts of marriage, when you made contracts, which was but seldom, were written in bad Latin, by clerks; you did not know what you had stipulated: and when you had children, there came a shaven monk from Rome, who proved to you, that your wife was not your wife, that she was your cousin in the last degree, that your marriage was sacrilegious, that your children were bastards, and that you were damned if you did not, without delay, make over one-half of your property to the chamber called Apostolical.

Your *basiloi* — kings — were not better treated than yourselves: you had nine excommunicated — if I am not mistaken — by the servant of the servants of God. Excommunication implied, of consequence, the confiscation of goods; so that your *basiloi* lost all right to their crown, which the Roman pontiff presented to whichever of his friends he thought proper.

You will tell me, my dear Welsh, that the people of Britain, or England, and even the Teutonic emperors, have been worse used than you, and that they were fully as ignorant. That is true, but that does not justify you: and if the British nation was so stupid as to be a long time a feudatory province to a Druid beyond the Alps, you will acknowledge that it contrived to revenge the affront; endeavor to follow the example if you can.

You had formerly a king who, though unfortunate in all his designs and expeditions, deserves some praise for having taught you to read and write; he even sent to Italy for persons who taught you the

Greek language, and for others who taught you painting and statuary: but there passed more than a hundred years before you had a tolerable painter or sculptor; and as for those who learned the Greek, and even the Hebrew, they were almost all burned alive, having incurred the suspicion of reading certain Judaical books; a thing highly dangerous.

I am willing to allow you, my dear Welshmen, that your country is the first country in the world; and yet you do not possess the largest domain in the smallest of the four quarters of the earth. Consider that Spain is of somewhat greater extent, that Germany is still more so, that Poland and Switzerland are bigger, and that there are provinces in Russia of which the country of the Welsh would not make a fourth part.

I wish your country may prove the first in the world for the fertility of its soil: but, for God's sake, think of your forty leagues of lands toward Bordeaux, of that part of your Champagne to which you have given the noble appellation of "the Lousy," of whole provinces where the inhabitants live entirely upon chestnuts, and of others, where there is no bread to be had but rye bread: take notice of the prohibition you lie under to export corn out of your country; a prohibition founded upon your want, and perhaps, too, upon your character, which would excite you to sell all you have as fast as possible, in order to purchase it again at a very high price three months after; in this you resemble certain Americans, who sell their beds in the morning, forgetting that they will want them at night.

Add to this, that the expense which the fashionable part of the nation is at, in flour to powder themselves, whether you have your hair dressed in the royal bird fashion, or whether you wear it loose, like King Clodio and the privy councillors, is an expense so universal that it is very reasonable to prevent the exportation of a commodity of which you make so good a use.

First people of the earth, consider that you have in your kingdom of Frankreich about two millions of inhabitants who walk in wooden shoes during six months of the year, and who go barefooted during the remaining six.

Are you the first people of the earth for commerce and maritime glory? Alas! I have heard it said, but I cannot believe that yours is the only nation in the world that buys the right of judging men, and even of leading them to be killed in battle. I have been assured that you make the public treasure pass through fifty hands before it arrives at the royal treasury; and when it has gone through all these strainers, it is at last reduced to the fifth part of its value at most.

In answer to this you will allege that you are extremely successful in comic operas: but can you deny that you are indebted to Italy for your comic as well as your serious operas? I will own that you have invented some modes, though you now adopt almost all those of the people of Britain. But was it not a Genoese who discovered the fourth part of the world, where you possess only two or three little islands? Was it not a native of Portugal who

opened to you a passage to the East Indies, where you lately lost your little factories?

Perhaps you may be the first people in the world for the invention of arts: yet, was not the compass invented by John Goya, of Melphi? Was it not the German, Schwarz, who discovered the secret of inflammable powder? Was not printing, of which you make so much use, the fruit of a German's ingenious labor?

When you are disposed to read the new pamphlets, which represent you as so learned a people, you sometimes make use of spectacles: thank Francis Spina for this; for without him you would never have been able to read small characters. You have telescopes; for them thank James Metius, the Dutchman, and Galileo, the Florentine.

If you sometimes amuse yourselves with barometers and thermometers, to whom are you indebted for them? To Torricelli, who invented the latter.

Many of you study the true system of the planetary world: it was a man born in Polish Prussia who discovered this secret of the Creator. You are aided in your calculations by logarithms; it is to the immense labor of Lord Napier and his associates that you are obliged for them: it is Guericke of Magdeburg that you should thank for the air-pump.

It was this same Galileo, whom I have just mentioned, who first discovered the satellites of Jupiter, the spots in the sun, and its rotation upon its axis. The Dutchman, Huygens, could see the ring of

Saturn; an Italian could see its satellites when you could perceive nothing at all.

In fine, it was the great Newton who demonstrated to you the nature of light, and who discovered the great law which causes the stars to move, and which directs heavy bodies toward the centre of the earth.

First people of the world, you love to adorn your closets, you hang up fine prints in them; but reflect, that the Florentine Finiguerra is the father of this art, which immortalizes what the pencil cannot preserve. You have also fine clocks; this likewise is an invention of the Dutchman, Huygens.

You sometimes wear brilliants upon your fingers; reflect that it was the people of Venice that first began to cut them, and to imitate pearls.

You sometimes contemplate yourselves in a looking-glass; it is to Venice likewise that you are indebted for this invention.

I should therefore be glad if you would show in your books a little more respect for your neighbors. You don't indeed do like Rome, where all those who discover any truth are brought before the Inquisition, let that truth be of what nature it will; and where Galileo was obliged to fast upon bread and water, for having taught them that the planets move round the sun. But what do you do? As soon as a useful discovery renders another nation illustrious, you combat it, and that for a long time. Newton shows the astonished world the seven primitive and unchangeable rays of light; you, for twenty years, deny what has been proven by experiments, instead

of making those experiments yourselves. He demonstrated gravitation to you: and during forty years, you, in opposition to him, maintain the impertinent romance of the Cartesian vortices. In a word, you never yield, till all Europe has laughed at your obstinacy.

In other countries, inoculation saves the lives of thousands; you exert yourselves for above forty years in endeavors to decry this salutary practice. If sometimes, in carrying to the grave your wives or your children, dead of a natural smallpox, you feel a moment's remorse — as you happen to have a moment of grief and regret — if you then repent not having adopted the practice of nations more wise and more resolute than you; if you sometimes venture to do that which is so common among them, this resolution does not hold, prejudice and lightness resume their ancient empire over you.

You either are ignorant, or pretend to be ignorant, that in the London hospitals set apart for the natural and artificial smallpox, one-fourth of the patients who have common smallpox die, while scarcely one out of four hundred of those that have been inoculated dies.

Thus you let one-fourth of your fellow-citizens perish; and when you are shocked at this calculation, which shows you to be so imprudent and so blameworthy, what do you do? You consult licentiates, either those of the foundation of Robert Sorbon, or others: you present requisitions! It is thus you maintained these against Harvey, when he had discovered the circulation of the blood: in this man-

ner were decrees issued by the Parliament of Paris, which condemned to the galleys those who wrote against the "Categories" of Aristotle.

Oh, first people of the earth, when will you become reasonable? You are under the necessity of acknowledging the truth of all I have said to you. You make answer, that all your follies do not prevent Mademoiselle du Chap from selling female habits and ornaments all over the North, no more than it prevents your language from being spoken at Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Moscow. I shall not take into consideration the importance of the first of these articles; the second is alone the subject of my discourse. You make it your boast that your language is almost as universal as the Greek and Latin were formerly. To whom are you indebted for this? To about a score of authors of genius; all of whom you neglected, persecuted, and tormented, during their lives. You chiefly owe this triumph of your language in foreign countries, to the multitudes of natives who were obliged to quit their country about 1613: Bayle, Leclerc, Basnage, Bernard, Rapin Thoiras, Beausobre, Lenfant, and many more, departed to make Holland and Germany illustrious: literary commerce was one of the greatest advantages of the United Provinces, and was entirely lost to you. The misfortunes of your countrymen contributed greatly to make your language known to so many nations: the Racines, the Corneilles, the Molières, the Boileaus, the Quinaults, the La Fontaines, and your good writers in prose, have doubtless greatly contributed to spread abroad

your language and your reputation; it is a great advantage, but it does not justify you in thinking that you surpass the Greeks and Romans in everything.

In the first place, be so good as to consider that you have no art or science for the knowledge of which you are not indebted to the Greeks; the very names of those arts and sciences sufficiently prove this; poetry, logic, dialectics, geometry, metaphysics, geography, even theology, if it be a science, all declare to you the source from which you derive them.

There is not a single woman that does not speak Greek without being aware of it; for if she says that she has seen a tragedy or a comedy; that an ode has been read to her; that one of her relations has had a fit of apoplexy, or is paralytic; that he has quinsy, or that a surgeon has bled him in the cephalic vein; that she has been at church, where a deacon has sung the litany; if she speaks of bishops, priests, archdeacons, pope, liturgy, anthem, eucharist, baptism, mysteries, decalogue, evangelists, hierarchy, etc., it is very certain that she has pronounced scarcely a word that is not Greek.

True it is, that those who derive all these terms from a foreign language may make so happy a use of them that the disciples may at last surpass the masters. But when, in process of time, you had formed your language of the ruins of the Greek and Latin, blended with your ancient Welsh and Teutonic terms, did you then succeed so far as to compose a language sufficiently copious, expressive, and

harmonious? Does not your sterility sufficiently appear from the dry and barbarous terms you employ upon all occasions? *Bout du pied, bout de doigt, bout d'oreille, bout de nez, bout de fil, bout de pont, etc.*— End of the foot, end of the finger, end of the ear, end of the nose, end of the thread, end of the bridge, etc., whilst the Greeks express all these different things by terms full of energy and harmony. You have been likewise reproached with using the expressions *un bras de rivière, un bras de mer, un cul d'artichaud, un cul de lampe, un cul de sac, etc.* Scarcely do you allow yourselves to use the word "*cul*" in its proper sense before matrons worthy of respect; and yet you make use of no other word to express things with which it has no sort of connection. Jerome Carré has proposed to you the word "*impasse,*" to signify your streets that have no passsage from them; this term is noble and significant; yet, to your shame be it spoken, it is constantly printed in your royal almanac, that one of you lives in the "*cul de sac,*" and the other in the "*cul de Blancs-manteaux.*" Fie! are you not ashamed? The Romans called such streets as had no issue "*angiportus;*" they could not find any resemblance between a street and the thing signified by the word "*cul.*"

What shall I say of the word "*trou,*" of which you make so frequent and so noble a use?

Do you not think that the names of your gates, your streets, and your temples would have a fine effect in an epic poem? We take pleasure in seeing Hector run from the temple of Pallas to the Scæan

gate. The ear is as much pleased as the imagination delighted, when the Greeks advance from Tenedos to the Trojan shore, upon the banks of the rivers Simois and Scamander; but, speak honestly, could a poet represent your heroes descending from the church of *St. Pierre aux Bœufs,* St. Peter with oxen; or *St. Jaques du haut pas,* St. James of high step; advancing with fury by the street of *Pet au diable,* devil's fort; and by the street *Troussevache,* drive-cow; embarking upon the gallery of St. Cloud, and going to join battle at the square of *Longjumeau,* long-twin.

The curious among you preserve a prodigious number of memoirs of the transactions that passed between the death of Henry II. and Henry IV. These are monuments of rudeness produced by the itch of writing; they are collections of satires occasioned by shocking events transmitted to posterity in the low style of the populace: at that time you had but one historian, and he was obliged to write in Latin.

At last you have cleared your language of this barbarous rust, of this sordid meanness; you have composed some good books; but have you in them surpassed Cicero and Demosthenes? Have you written better than Livy, Tacitus, Thucydides, and Xenophon? What author, of a genius above mediocrity, has hitherto written your annals?

Is it becoming in Daniel to say, in the very first page of his history: "It was not till the reign of the great Clovis, that the French made themselves forever masters of these vast provinces?" Certain

it is, that the great Clovis did not make himself master of them *forever;* as his successors lost the whole tract that lies between Cologne and Franche-Comté. This Daniel tells you, from the romancer Gregory of Tours, that the soldiers of Clovis, after the battle of Tolbiac cried out, as it were in concert: "We renounce mortal gods; we will no longer adore any but the eternal God; we no longer acknowledge any other God but Him whom the holy Bishop Rémi preaches to us."

It is not indeed possible that a whole French army should, in concert, pronounce these words, and these antitheses of mortal and immortal. Your Daniel resembles your La Motte, who, in an abridgment of the "Iliad," makes the whole Grecian army pronounce this verse, when Achilles is reconciled to Agamemnon:

Que ne vaincra-t-il point? il s'est vaincu lui-même.

Whom can he not conquer? he himself subdues.

How could the army of the Franks renounce mortal gods? Did it worship men? Were not Theut, Irminsul, Odin, and Fridda, whom these barbarians adored, immortal in their opinion? Daniel should not have been ignorant, that all the inhabitants of the North adored a Supreme Being, who presided over the secondary divinities; he had nothing to do but to cite the ancient book of Edda, quoted by the learned Huet, bishop of Avranches; he had nothing to do but to read what Huet has said expressly in his treatise concerning the manners of the Germans: "*Regnator omnium Deus*"—"God, the ruler of all;"

this deity was called God, or Goth, Goth the good; and it is matter of much surprise that barbarians should give the deity a title so worthy of him. Daniel should not therefore have put such an absurdity into the mouth of a whole army; a folly which suits only a Christian pedagogue. But pray in what language did Rémi preach to these Bructeri and Sicambri? He spoke either Latin or Welsh; and the Sicambri spoke the ancient Teutonic. Rémi, in all appearance, renewed the miracle of the Pentecost: *"Et unusquisque intendebat linguam suam,"*— "And each understood his own language." If you examine Mézeray carefully, what a heap of fables, what confusion, and what a style do you meet with! Deserve Livys, and you will have them.

I am inclined to think that among you the eloquence of the bar and the pulpit have had all the improvement they are capable of. The division of your sermons into three heads, when there is no occasion for such division; an address to the Virgin Mary, which precedes this division; a long Welsh discourse upon a Latin text, which is suited, the best it can, to that discourse; and, finally scraps of commonplace, repeated a thousand times over, are masterpieces of composition, no doubt; the pleadings of your lawyers upon the customs of Hurepoix or Gatinois will pass to the latest posterity; but I doubt much whether they will cause the Greek and Roman eloquence to be forgotten.

I am far from denying that Pascal, Bossuet, and Fénelon were extremely eloquent. It was upon the appearing of these geniuses that you ceased to be

Welsh, and that you became French. But don't compare the "Provincial Letters" to the "Philippics." First, consider that the importance of the subject is something: the names of Philip and Mark Antony are somewhat above the names of Father Annat, Escobar, and Tambourini. The interests of Greece, and the civil wars of Rome are objects more considerable than sufficient grace which is insufficient; co-operating grace which does not operate; and efficacious grace which is without efficaciousness. The great attraction of these "Provincial Letters" is lost with the Jesuits; but the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero still instruct Europe, while the objects of these harangues exist no longer; while the Greeks are only slaves, and the Romans only monks.

I am very sensible that the funeral orations of Bossuet are exceedingly fine; that they do not even want sublimity; but what is a funeral oration? a discourse of mere ostentation, a declamatory piece, a collection of commonplace, and often a violation of the truth. Should these poetical harangues be placed in the same class with the solid orations of Cicero and Demosthenes?

Your Fénelon, an admirer of the ancients, whose genius was formed by reading their works, lighted his waxen taper by their immortal flames; you will not be so presumptuous as to maintain that his Calypso abandoned by Telemachus, comes near the Dido of Virgil: the cold and unaffecting passion of Telemachus, whom Mentor pushes into the sea with his fist, in order to cure him of his love, does not

seem to be one of the most sublime inventions. And will you presume that the prose of that work is comparable to the poetry of Homer and Virgil? Oh my Welsh countrymen, what is a poem in prose, but an acknowledgment of its author's deficiency in point of genius? Do you not know, that it is easier to compose ten volumes of tolerable prose in your language, than ten good lines in verse, in this language overloaded with articles, deprived of inversions, poor in poetical terms, sterile in bold turns of expression, subjected to an eternal monotony of rhyme, and void of rhymes in the most noble subjects?

Do not you recollect that when Louis XIV., whom readers were resolved to take for Idomeneus, was dead; when Louvois was forgotten, whose character they discovered in Protesilaus; when the marquise de Maintenon (Mme. Scarron), whom they compared to the old Asterbe, was no longer envied; Telemachus lost much of its esteem. But the "*tu Marcellus eris*" of Virgil will always live in the memory of men; these lines and those which precede them, will be always cited with admiration:

Ter sese attollens cubitoque innixa levavit,
Ter revoluta toro est, oculisque errantibus alto
Quæsivit cœlo lucem, ingemuitque reperta.

In a prose translation of Virgil — for it is impossible for you to translate him in verse, and you have not yet had any success in rendering the sense of the Latin authors in prose — an imitation of the admirable speech of Dido, which follows, has been cited:

Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor,
Qui face Dardanios ferroque sequare colonos.
Littora littoribus contraria, fluctibus undas
Imprecor, arma armis, pugnent ipsique nepotes.

This is the pretended imitation of Virgil, which is represented as a faithful copy of this grand picture.

Puisse après mon trépas s'élever de mon cendre
Un feu qui sur la terre aille au loin se répandre:
Excités par mes vœux puissent mes successeurs,
Jurer dès le berceau qu'ils seront mes vengeurs,
Et du nom de Troyens ennemis implacables,
Attaquer en tous lieux ces rivaux redoutables.
Que l'univers en proie à ces deux nations
Soit le théâtre affreux de leurs dissensions,
Que tout serve à nourir cette haine invincible;
Qu'elle croisse toujours jusqu'au moment terrible
Que l'un ou l'autre cède aux armes du vainqueur,
Que ses derniers efforts signalent sa fureur!

When I am dead, may from my fatal urn
Arise a fire which half the earth may burn:
Roused by my vows, may my successors swear
In childhood to make my revenge their care,
And of the Trojan name eternal foes,
May they my rivals in each clime oppose.
Be earth a prey to these two nations' rage,
Let it to their contentions be a stage;
May all things serve to feed this direful hate,
May it grow till the moment marked by fate;
Till one or t'other party yield of course,
May its last efforts signalize its force!

Do but consider how weak, vicious, forced, and languishing this pretended copy is:

Puisse après mon trépas s'élever de ma cendre
Un feu qui sur la terre aille au loin se répandre!

When I am dead, may from my fatal urn
Arise a fire which half the earth may burn!

What means this fire which is to spread itself far and wide over the earth? Do we find in these verses filled with breaks, the least word which recalls the ideas of grief, of terror, and of vengeance, which breathe in this striking line:

Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor.

The author has an avenger in view, and the bald imitator speaks of a fire which is to burn half the earth. How much do the rhyming epithets, "implacables," "redoubtables," "invincibles," "terribles," weaken the painting of Virgil! How puerile is any epithet that adds nothing to the sense.

I do not know who is the author of these lines; but this I know, that when the rhyming of a Welsh poet comes in competition with the most beautiful passages of an ancient author, it must suffer by the comparison.

Oh, ye French, I take pleasure in joining with you in the admiration of your great poets; it is chiefly they who have spread your language to the polar circle, and who have forced even the Italians and Spaniards to learn it. I begin with your natural and pleasing La Fontaine: most of his fables are borrowed from Æsop, the Phrygian, and Phædrus, the Roman: there are about fifty which are masterpieces for nature, for grace, and for diction. This species of writing is altogether unknown to the rest of the moderns. I must own, I could wish that this extraordinary man had been less negligent in his

other fables; that he had written this language, which he has made so familiar to neighboring nations, with greater purity; that his style had been more chaste and exact; that while he greatly surpassed Phædrus in delicacy, he had equalled him in purity of elocution. I am sorry to see him begin by a short dedication to a prince, in which he says to him:

Et si de l'agréer je n'emporte le prix,
J'aurai du moins l'honneur de l'avoir entrepris.

To please him should the glory be denied,
'Twill be at least an honor to have tried.

It is a comical sort of glory to attempt to please a person; and what an absurd phrase is that of "*le prix d'agréer*"—"the prize of pleasing!" Phædrus does not express himself in this manner: Phædrus does not make the ant say, "*ni mon grenier ni mon armoire ne se remplit à babiller*"—"Neither my barn nor my chest are filled by prate." The fox in Phædrus says, "the grapes are too green," but he does not add, "they are good only for little brats."

It vexes me, when I meet with the expression "*la cigale ayant chanté tout l'été,*" the grasshopper having sung the whole summer; to which the ant answers, "*Vous chantiez! j'en suis fort aise, hé bien, dansez maintenant*"—"You sang! I am glad to hear it; well then, now dance."

The wolf might say to the dog with the chain, that he would not buy plenty with his liberty; but this wolf makes me uneasy when he adds:

Je ne voudrois pas même à ce prix un trésor;
Cela dit maître loup s'enfuit & court encor.

Bought at this price, I'd not a treasure prize;
This said, away he fled, and still he flies.

A wolf never desired gold or silver.

The man who blows his fingers because he is cold, and who breathes upon his soup because it is too hot is quite in the right: he does not at all deserve to have it said of him,

Arrière ceux dont la bouche
Souffle le chaud & le froid.

Avaunt the man, I like him not,
Who blows what's cold as well as hot.

It is abusing a trivial proverb which is not here properly applied: but these little blemishes do not prevent the fables of La Fontaine from being an immortal work.

His tales are, doubtless, the best we have; this merit, if it be a merit, is unknown to Greek and Roman antiquity. La Fontaine has, in this respect, surpassed Rabelais, and often equalled the simplicity and precision which are to be met with in three or four works of Marot; in his best tales, you meet with that pleasing vein, that nature of Passerat, who lived in the reign of Henry III., and has left us the metamorphosis of the cuckoo, a work too little known, in which we discover nothing of the rusticity of the age in which it was written, and which one would be tempted to think a work of La Fontaine himself.

Thus Passerat ends the tale of this poor, jealous wretch, who being metamorphosed into a cuckoo:

S'envole au bois, au bois se tient caché,
Honteux d'avoir sa femme tant cherché;

Et néanmoins quand le printemps s'enflame
Nos cœurs d'amour, il cherche encor sa femme:
*Parle au passants & ne peut dire qu'*OU,
Rien que ce mot ne retint le coucou
D'humain parler: mais par œuvres il montre
Qu'onc en oubli ne mit sa malencontre,
Se souvenant qu'on vint pondre chez lui,
Venge ce tort & pond au nid d'autrui:
Voilà comment sa doleur il allège.
Heureux ceux-là qui ont ce privilège.

Flies to the woods, there shuns the throng,
Vexed to have sought his spouse so long;
Yet when the spring revives love's flame
In every heart, he seeks his dame:
To all that pass he speaks and mutters
Ou, for no other word he utters;
But by his actions plainly shows,
He recollects his wrongs and woes;
Remembers how birds on a day
Came in his nest their eggs to lay;
For which he just revenge prepares,
Resolved in turn to lay in theirs,
Thus he alleviates his grief;
Blessed who can thus procure relief.

Upon this style La Fontaine formed his; for all your poets of the age of Louis IV. began by imitating their predecessors; Corneille at first imitated the style of Mairet and Rotrou; Boileau that of Regnier.

Perhaps the grand defect of La Fontaine's tales is that they almost all turn upon the same subject; it is always the debauching of a daughter or a wife: the style of them is not always correct and elegant; they are disfigured by negligences, by prolixities, and by proverbial and trivial expressions.

He seems to be inferior to Ariosto in the tales which he has borrowed from that author. Ariosto not only has the merit of being the inventor, but he has woven those little adventures into a long poem, wherein they are related as there occurs occasion. His style is always pure; there is in him no prolixity, no defect of style, no foreign ornaments; in a word, he is a painter, and a very great painter; that is the first merit of poetry; and it is what la Fontaine has neglected. Observe, in the "Joconda" of Ariosto, the young Greek who finds Fiammetta in her bed while she lies between King Astolpho and Joconda.

Viene all'uscio e lo spinge, e quel li cede;
Entra pian piano, và a tenton col piede.
Fa lunghi i passi, e sempre in quel di dietro
Tutto si ferma, e l'altro par che mova,
A guisa che di dar tema nel vetro;
Non che'l terreno abbia a calcar ma l'uova,
E tien la mano innanzi simil metro,
Va brancolando in fin che'l letto trova;
Et di la dove gli altri avean le piante;
Tacito si caccio col capo inante.

The door yields to her hand, she enters slow,
And groping cautious, forward tries to go;
Her steps she lengthens, onward tries to pass,
As if she feared to strike against a glass;
Her hand before resembling motions kept,
Thus she approached the bed wherein they slept;
And then, from where the others' legs were placed
Advancing forward, passed with eager haste.

It is surprising that your Boileau, in the judgment he has passed upon the "Joconda" of Ariosto, and upon that of La Fontaine, should reproach the Italian

author with certain liberties; he does not recollect that it is an innkeeper that speaks; every person should preserve his peculiar character. Ariosto, while he attends to this costume, as the painters call it, does not let a single word escape him that is not pure Tuscan; an extraordinary merit in a work of such length, written entirely in doubled stanzas.

I have spoken too long of this trivial species of writing, which, trivial as it is, contributes to the glory of literature;

In tenui labor at tenuis non gloria.

The subject's trivial, but not so the praise.

I should enlarge upon the superior merit of your theatre, whose only defect is that it is not sufficiently tragical, if this subject had not been so often treated of already.

It is my opinion that Euripides would blush at his glory, that he would hide himself through shame, if he was to see the "Phædra" and "Iphigenia" of Racine. The tragedies of Racine, and many of the scenes of Corneille, are some of the finest pieces in your language. Many of the scenes of Quinault are admirable, in a species of poetry no more known to the ancients than that of La Fontaine's tales. Your Molière surpasses both Terence and Plautus; I will acknowledge, likewise, that Boileau's "Art of Poetry" is more poetical than that of Horace; that he set the example in giving the precept, and that his copy is superior to the original. This is your glory; strive to preserve it: you excel in these two sorts of composition alone, you have rivals or mas-

ters in all others. You have been so affected by the charms of verse, that nowadays your treatises upon physics and metaphysics unhappily breathe the spirit of poetry; no longer able to write poems in the same taste in which they were written in the age of Louis XIV. you have only discovered the secret of how to spoil your prose.

You are threatened with another plague; I am informed that there rises among you, a set of rigid people who call themselves solid; gloomy geniuses, who pretend to judgment because they are void of imagination; men of learning, enemies to letters, who are forever banishing polite antiquity and fable. Do not give ear to their insinuations, oh, Frenchmen! If you do, you will soon become Welsh again.

Imagination, daughter of heaven, built formerly in Greece a temple of transparent marble; with her own hands she painted upon the walls of the temple all nature in allegorical pictures: there Jupiter, the sovereign of gods and men, was seen to bring forth the Goddess of Wisdom from his brain; the Goddess of Beauty is likewise his daughter, but she did not spring from his head: this Beauty is the mother of Love: that this Beauty may have the power of enchanting hearts, she should be never unattended by the three Graces: and who are these necessary companions of Beauty? One is Aglaia, who burns all; another Euphrosyne, who inspires hearts with tranquil joy; and the third Thalia, who strews flowers upon the footsteps of the goddess; this is the signification of their three names. The muses teach all the elegant arts; they are daughters of Memory,

and their birth informs you that, without the assistance of Memory, man can neither invent nor combine two ideas.

This then is what barbarians would destroy; and what can they substitute in the place of these divine emblems? The pleadings of M. de Saci, with some other works of equal merit? The harangue of M. Stephen le Dain, pronounced in the secretary's office?

Oh, ye Welsh, if Janus with a double forehead, representing the year which begins and ends, retains among you still the rude and unintelligible name of January; if your April, which signifies nothing, is with the ancients the month consecrated to Aphrodite, to Venus, to the principle that makes nature young; if the barbarous names, *Vendredi* and *Mercredi,* Friday and Wednesday, recall the ideas of Venus and Mercury; if the whole heaven in its constellations is still filled with the fables of Greece; respect your masters, if you have not a mind to resemble that learned Welshman, who maintained that the twelve patriarchs, sons of Jacob, had invented the twelve signs of the zodiac; that the Ram was that of Isaac, the Twins that of Jacob and Esau, the Virgin that of Rebecca, Aquarius, the pitcher of Rebecca; and that the other signs had been given wrongly.

Believe me, my dear brethren, you would not do amiss to retain the beautiful profane inventions of your predecessors.

ANCIENT AND MODERN TRAGEDY.

A LETTER TO CARDINAL QUIRINI, BISHOP OF BRESCIA, AND KEEPER OF THE VATICAN LIBRARY.

My Lord:

Well did it become a genius like yours, and one who presides over the most ancient library in the world, to give yourself entirely up to letters. Such heads of our Church we may expect to see under a pontiff who instructed the Christian world before he was appointed to rule over it: but if literature in general stands indebted to you, still greater are my own obligations for the honor which you did me in translating my *"Henriade,"* and the poem of *" Fontenoy,"* into such elegant verse. The two virtuous heroes whom I celebrated have become yours. You have condescended to embellish my work, that you might render the names of Henry IV. and Louis XV. still more illustrious, and spread a taste for the polite arts throughout all Europe.

Among the many obligations which we of later ages are under to the Italians, and particularly to the popes and their ministers, we must not pass over the cultivation and improvement of the belles-lettres, which have softened by degrees the gross and barbarous manners of our northern climates, and to which we are in a great measure indebted for our politeness, our happiness, and our glory.

Under the great Leo X., with Grecian eloquence the Grecian theatre revived also. The *" Sofonisba"* of the celebrated prelate Trissino, the pope's

nuncio, was the first regular tragedy seen in Europe after so many ages of barbarism: in like manner as the "*Calandria*" of Cardinal Bibbiena had been before that time the first comedy in modern Italy: you were the first that built spacious theatres, and gave the world some idea of that splendor of ancient Greece, which drew together so many foreign nations at its solemn festivals, and became the universal model of perfection in every art and science.

If your nation has not always equalled the ancients in tragedy, it is not to be attributed to your language, which is copious, flexible, and harmonious, adapted to all subjects: but it is in my opinion, extremely probable that the great progress you have made in music has in some measure put a stop to your improvement in tragedy: one perfection has destroyed another.

Permit me then to enter into a literary discussion with your lordship on this head. Some people, perhaps, who are used to the general style of dedications, will be surprised to find me comparing Greek with modern customs, instead of comparing the great men of antiquity with those of your illustrious house: but I am talking to a man of letters, and a philosopher; to one from whose knowledge I may receive improvement; with whom I have the honor to be associated in the most ancient academy in Europe, whose members often employ themselves in researches of this nature: I am speaking, in short, to one who had much rather give me instruction than receive encomiums from me.

One of your most celebrated authors tells us, that

since the golden period in Athens, Tragedy, deserted and forsaken, wanders about from country to country in search of some kind friend that will assist and restore her to her former honors, but has as yet found none; if he means by this that no nation among the moderns has theatres where the choruses are almost always on the stage, singing strophes, antistrophes, and epodes, accompanied with serious dances; that we do not set our actors on stilts, or cover their faces with masks that express joy on one side and grief on the other: if he means that the declamation of your tragedies is not noted and accompanied with instruments, he is certainly in the right, and I don't know whether all this is not rather in our favor; prehaps our manner, by approaching more nearly to nature, is fully as eligible as that of the Greeks, which had much more splendor and magnificence.

But if he only designed to insinuate that this noble art is not in general so much considered since the restoration of letters as it was formerly; that there are nations in Europe who have treated with ingratitude the successors of Sophocles and Euripides; that our theatres are not like those superb edifices which the Athenians were so proud of; and that we do not take the same pains as they did in representations, which have become so necessary in large and opulent cities; we cannot but entirely agree with him.

Where shall we find any public spectacle at present that can give us any idea of the Greek stage? Perhaps in your tragedies, or operas. What say the

critics, an Italian opera like the theatre of Athens? Yes, the Italian recitative is exactly the *mélopée* of the ancients, a declamation in notes, and accompanied with instruments of music: this *mélopée,* which is tiresome and disagreeable in your bad tragic operas, is admirable in those few which are good. The choruses which you have added of late years approach still nearer to the ancient chorus, as the music in them is different from that of the recitative; in the same manner as the strophe, antistrophe, and epode, among the Greeks were set to music, though they differed from the *mélopée* of the dialogue: add to this, that in many of the tragic operas of the famous Metastasio, the unities of place, time, and action, are observed; besides that, those pieces abound in that expressive poetry, and elegance of diction, which embellish nature without overloading her; a happy talent, which none of the moderns have possessed but Racine among us, and of all the English writers, Addison alone.

I am sufficiently aware that these tragedies, which are so agreeable from the music and magnificence of the spectacle, have indeed one fault which the Greeks always avoided; a fault which has often turned pieces finely written, and in all other respects extremely regular, into monstrous and unnatural productions; I mean, the fault of bringing into every scene little airs and catches that interrupt the action, merely to show off the quavers of an effeminate voice that exerts itself to the utter destruction of probability and good sense. The excellent author whom I just now mentioned, and who has taken

several of his tragedies from French writers, has, by the force of genius in some measure remedied this absurdity, which has become, as it were, necessary. The words of his airs or sonnets embellish the subject; they are full of pathos and passion, and sometimes not inferior to the finest odes of Horace; for a proof of which I shall beg leave to quote that very affecting strophe sung by Arbaces, who is supposed to have been falsely accused:

Vo solcando un mar crudele
Senza vele
E senza sarte
Freme l'onda, il ciel s'imbruna,
Cresce il vento, e manca l'arte:
E il voler della fortuna
Son costretto a seguitar.
Infelice in questo stato.
Son da tutti abbandonato;
Meco sola è l'innocenza
Che mi porta a naufragar.

To this I will beg leave to add another fine air, sung by the king of the Parthians, conquered by Adrian, when he endeavors to render even his defeat subservient to his revenge:

Sprezza il furor del vento
Robusta quercia avvezza
Di cento verni e cento
L'injurie a tolerar.
E se pur cade al suolo
Spiega per l'onde il volo;
E con quel vento istesso
Va contrastando il mar.

There are besides these many others of equal merit; but what are the greatest beauties when out

of their proper place? What would an Athenian audience have said, if Œdipus and Orestes, just in the very minute of the discovery, the most interesting part of the drama, had entertained them with quavering out a fine air, or repeating similes to Electra and Jocaste! We must therefore, after all, acknowledge that the opera, so bewitching to an Italian ear by its musical attractions, though on the one hand it may be said to have revived, has notwithstanding on the other, in effect, destroyed the true Greek tragedy.

Our French opera deviates still more from the right point: as our *mélopée* differs more than yours from natural declamation, and is withal more languid. It will not allow our scenes their proper length, but requires short dialogues and little sententious remarks, every one of which makes a kind of sonnet.

Let those who are thoroughly acquainted with the state of literature in other nations, and whose knowledge is not confined to the airs of our own ballets, recollect that admirable scene in *"La Clemenza di Tito,"* between Titus and his favorite, who had conspired against him. I mean the scene where Titus addresses himself to Sestus in these divine words:

Siam soli, il tuo sovrano
Non è presente: apri il tuo core à Tito,
Confidati all' amico. To ti prometto
Che Augusto nol saprà.

Or let them read the soliloquy that follows, where Titus has these words, words which should be an

eternal lesson for kings, and the admiration of all mankind:

——Il torre altrui la vita
E facoltà comune
Al più vil della terra; il darla è solo
De' numi, e de' regnanti.

These two scenes, comparable to the finest which Greece ever produced, if not superior to them; these two scenes, worthy of Corneille when he is no declaimer, or of Racine when he is not flimsy; these two scenes, which are not founded on opera love, but on the noblest sentiments of the human heart, are at least three times as long as the longest scenes in our musical tragedies: but these would not be borne in our Lyric theatre, which is only supported by maxims of gallantry, and ill-painted passions, except the *"Armida,"* and some fine scenes in *"Iphigenia,"* works more admired than imitated among us.

Among the many faults of our operas, we have, like you, a number of little detached airs, even in the most tragical parts, and which are more inexcusable than yours, because they have less affinity to the subject; the words are generally submitted entirely to the composers, who not being able to express themselves in the manly and vigorous terms of our language, require soft, vague, and effeminate words, foreign to the action, and adapted as well as they can to little ballads, like those which at Venice are called "*Barcarole.*" Where, for instance, is the connection between Theseus, just discovered by his

father on the point of being poisoned by him, and this ridiculous speech:

[1] *Le plus sage*
S'enflamme & s'engage
Sans savoir comment.

But with all these faults I am still of opinion, that our good tragic operas, such as "*Atys*," "*Armida*," and "*Theseus*," may give us some idea of the Greek theatre, because they are sung like the ancient tragedies, and because the chorus, even defective as it now is, consisting of tedious panegyrics on the morality of love,[2] does notwithstanding, in some measure, resemble the Grecian chorus, by continuing on the stage almost throughout the piece. It does not indeed, among us, always say what it ought to say, nor inculcate virtue:

Et regat iratos, et amet peccare timentes;

but, upon the whole, one may venture to assert that the form of our tragic operas, considered with regard to some particulars, reminds us of the ancient Greek tragedy. Several learned men, who are well acquainted with the works of antiquity, seem to think with me, that they are at once the copy and the destruction of the Athenian stage; a copy of it, as

[1] i. e. The wisest men often fall in love, and engage themselves they know not how.

[2] The original is "*la morale amoureuse*." Perhaps none but a Frenchman can rightly comprehend what M. Voltaire means by this expression: the *morality of love*, as I have literally translated it, does not convey to us the true and precise idea.

they admit of the *mélopée,* the choruses, machines, and deities, and at the same time the destruction of it; as they have taught our young men to be fonder of sound than sense; to prefer the tickling of their ears to the improvement of their minds; the nonsense of sing-song to sublimity of sentiment; and have besides contributed to the success of many insipid and ill-written performances, which have been supported by a few pleasing airs: and yet, in spite of all these faults, that enchantment which arises from a happy mixture of fine scenes, choruses, dances, symphony, and a variety of decorations, bears all before it, and silences even criticism itself; insomuch that the best comedy or tragedy we have is never seen so often by the same people with half the pleasure that a middling opera is. Beauties which are regular, noble, and severe are seldom much sought after by vulgar minds. "*Cinna,*" perhaps, is played for two or three nights; and the "Venetian Festival" may run three months: a licentious epigram has more readers than an epic poem, and a little romance meets with more admirers than de Thou's history. Our nobility very seldom employ good painters, and at the same time will quarrel about the distorted figures, and brittle ornaments from China. We gild and varnish cabinets, yet neglect true architecture; in short, real merit is overlooked in almost every art and science, in favor of agreeable trifles.

Happily for us, true tragedy appeared before any of our operas, which might have stifled and suppressed it. Mairet was the first writer, who, in a

tragedy imitated from the "*Sofonisba*" of Trissino, introduced the three unities which you had taken from the Greeks. By degrees our stage became more and more refined, and shook off that indecency and barbarism which disgraced so many others about this period, and served at the same time for an excuse to those whose unenlightened severity of manners banished all public representations.

Our actors did not indeed appear like those of Athens, lifted up on cothurni, which were absolute stilts, nor were their faces hid under enormous masks with brass pipes to them, to increase the sound of the voice, and make it more sonorous and terrible: neither had we the *mélopée* of the Greeks, nor anything besides a simple harmonious declamation, the same which you had for some time practised. In short, our tragedies were a closer imitation of nature: we substituted history instead of Greek fables; politics, ambition, love and jealousy took their turns to animate the scene; while Augustus, Cinna, Cæsar, and Cornelia, names far more respectable than the fabulous heroes of antiquity, often made their appearance on our stage, and spoke as they would have done in ancient Rome.

I shall not pretend to assert that the French theatre was in all respects superior to the Greek, and ought to bury it in oblivion. Inventors have always held the first place in the memories of men; but whatever respect we may have for the geniuses of former ages, it does not prevent our often receiving much more pleasure from those who succeeded them. We admire Homer, but we read Tasso, and

find in him a variety of beauties to which Homer was a stranger. We admire Sophocles also, and yet how many of our good tragic writers have master-strokes which Sophocles would have been proud to imitate if he had lived after them? The Greeks would have learned from many of our excellent moderns to unravel their plots more naturally, and to link their scenes together in that artful, though imperceptible manner, so as never to leave the stage empty, and to make the actors go in and out with some reason for so doing. In this the ancients are frequently deficient; and in this Trissino has unfortunately imitated them.

I am satisfied, for example, that Sophocles and Euripides would have considered the first scene of "*Bajazet*" as a school of instruction, where an old general, by the questions which he asks, informs us that he is meditating some grand enterprise.

> But what did our brave janissaries? they
> Pay homage to their sultan, thinkest thou, Osman,
> It is sincere, knowest thou the hearts of men,
> Or canst thou read their secret purposes?

And a moment after:

> Thinkest thou with rapture they would follow me,
> And hearken to their vizier's voice again?

They would have admired the artful method which this conspirator takes in the discovery of his schemes, and the account which he gives of his actions; a merit which was unknown to the ancient writers. That mixture of the passions; that contrast of opposite sentiments; those animated dialogues between rivals of both sexes; those quarrels,

reciprocal threats and complaints; those interesting disputes where everything is said that ought to be said; with all those various incidents that are so well managed by modern writers, would have astonished them. They might perhaps have found fault with Hippolytus for being so ridiculously in love with Aricia, or with his governor for giving him lectures in gallantry, when he says:

> Where wouldst thou thyself have been,
> If still, like thee, thy mother had refused,
> With mutual love, to answer Theseus' vows?

Words taken from "Pastor Fido," and much fitter for a shepherd than the governor of a prince: but the same illustrious critics would be struck with admiration at hearing Phædra cry out:

> Who would have e'er believed it, my Œnone,
> I have a rival: yes, Hippolytus,
> Whose savage and unconquerable heart
> Was ne'er by pity or affection moved,
> This tyrant loves, this conqueror is subdued.

The despair of Phædra on the discovery of her rival is surely infinitely preferable to the tedious and ill-placed satire on learned women, which Euripides has put in the mouth of his Hippolytus, who degenerates from the hero into a low comic character. The Greeks would, above all, have been astonished at those strokes of the true sublime which abound in our modern writers: how would they have been charmed with this:

> What could he do, my lord, when three opposed him?
> He might have died.

Or the answer, still perhaps more beautiful and

affecting, which Hermione makes Orestes, when, after having insisted on his murdering Pyrrhus, she finds herself unfortunately obeyed, and cries out:

What had he done, and wherefore didst thou slay him?
What right hadst thou? who bade thee?

ORESTES.

O, ye gods!
Did not Hermione herself command me?

HERMIONE.

And shouldst thou have believed a frantic lover?

Indulge me in one more quotation from Cæsar's speech, when they present him with the urn containing the ashes of Pompey:

Ye sacred relics of a demigod,
Whose noble deeds and ever-honored name,
All conqueror as I am, I scarce can equal.

The Greeks, my lord, have beauties of another kind, but I appeal to you whether they have any that resemble these.

I will even go further, and venture to assert that the ancients, who were so passionately fond of liberty, and have so often said that there could be no dignity of sentiment but in a commonwealth, might learn to speak with energy, even on liberty itself, from some of our tragedies which were written in the bosom of monarchy.

The moderns have moreover succeeded oftener than the ancients in subjects of pure invention. We had many performances of that kind in the time of Cardinal Richelieu: it was indeed his peculiar taste, as well as that of the Spaniards; he was fond of forming plots and characters, and afterward giving

names to the persons of the drama, as we do in comedy: and in this he frequently amused himself, as an agreeable relief from the fatigue of public business. The "*Venceslas*" of Rotrou is entirely in this style, and all the story fabulous; the author wanted to paint a young man of violent passions, with a mixture of good and bad qualities; a father tender and weak. In some parts of the performance he has succeeded. "Heraclius" and "The Cid," taken from the Spanish, are both of them invented stories: there was indeed an emperor called Heraclius, and a Spanish captain who had the name of Cid; but scarcely one of the adventures which the authors of the tragedies attribute to them ever really happened. In "*Zaïre*" and "*Alzire*," if I may take the liberty to mention them, and which I only do because they are well known, and therefore may serve better for examples, everything is feigned, even the names. I cannot imagine after this, how Father Brumoy could say, in his account of the Greek theatre, that tragedy will not admit of feigned subjects, and that this liberty was never taken at Athens. He then sets himself to work to find out a reason for a thing which never was or could be. "The reason," says he, "I believe may be found, in the nature of the human soul; nothing can move it but probability: now it is not probable that facts so noble as those which must be the subject of tragedy should be absolutely unknown: if, therefore, the poet invents the whole subject, even to the very names, the spectator is shocked; everything

appears incredible to him; and the piece can never have its proper effect for want of probability."

First, I shall beg leave to observe, it is false that the Greeks did not admit this species of tragedy, for Aristotle expressly mentions Agatho as a writer celebrated for it; and, secondly, it is equally false that these subjects never succeed; experience decides against Brumoy in this particular: in the third place, the reason which he gives for the poor effect which this kind of tragedy must have is no less absurd; he must have little knowledge of the human heart, who thinks it cannot be moved by fiction; in the fourth place, a subject of pure invention, and a true subject not known, are absolutely the same thing to the spectator; and as our stage takes in subjects from every age and nation, a spectator must turn over all the books that ever were written before he can possibly know whether what he sees represented be fable or history; but he will certainly never take that trouble; if the piece is moving and pathetic, he will naturally be affected by it; and when he sees Polyeucte will never think of saying, "I do not remember to have heard talk of Paulinus and Severus; such people as these ought not to move or affect me!"

Brumoy should only have observed that pieces of this kind are more difficult to write than any others. The character of Phædra was already in Euripides: her declaration of love in Seneca the tragedian: all the scene between Augustus and Cinna in Seneca the philosopher: but Severus and Paulinus must be the product of the author's own brain. But if Father

Brumoy is mistaken with regard to this, and a few other particulars, still his book is on the whole one of the best and most useful performances we have; and though I find fault with his errors, I have at the same time the highest esteem for his taste and erudition.

To return therefore to the subject in hand, I once more assert that it would be want of feeling and judgment not to acknowledge that the French stage is infinitely superior to the Greek, in the artful conduct of its plots, in invention, and beauties of diction and sentiment without number; but, at the same time, it would be the height of partiality and injustice not to confess that love and gallantry have almost ruined our stage and deprived us of almost every advantage.

It cannot be denied, that, among four hundred tragedies which have been exhibited on our stage, since the time when it began to flourish, there are scarcely more than ten or twelve which are not founded on some love intrigue, which is certainly much fitter for comedy: the piece indeed is generally the same, the plot formed by jealousy and a rupture, and ended in a marriage; one continued scene of coquetry, in short a downright comedy, wherein princes act the principal parts, and a little blood is shed for form's sake. The greater part of these pieces were so very like comedies, that the actors began at last to recite them in the same tone as they did what we call high or serious comedy, which contributed in a great measure to degrade tragedy, all the pomp and magnificence of declama-

tion being entirely forgotten. The players piqued themselves on the merit of speaking verse exactly in the same manner as prose, without considering that a language above the ordinary language ought to be repeated in a tone above the vulgar and familiar one: and if some actors had not happily corrected this fault, our tragedy would soon have dwindled into a heap of discourses on love and gallantry, repeated without force or spirit, in a cold and lifeless manner: as a proof of this, it is not long since, among every company of players, the principal parts in tragedy were known only by the names of the gentleman lover, and the lady lover. If a stranger had asked at Athens which was their best actor of the lover in *"Iphigenia,"* *"Hecuba,"* the *"Heraclides,"* *"Œdipus,"* or *"Electra,"* they would not even have understood what he meant by such a question.

The French stage has indeed of late years endeavored to wash off this stain, by some tragedies wherein love is represented as a furious and terrible passion, worthy of the theatre; and by some others, where even the name of love is not so much as mentioned: never did love cause so many tears to flow as nature has: the heart is generally but slightly touched by the complaints of a lover, but it is deeply affected by the melancholy situation of a mother on the point of losing her son: certainly it was only in compliment to his friend that Despréaux said:

> Love finely painted by the poet's art,
> Opens the surest passage to the heart.

The path of nature is a thousand times more sure, as well as more noble. The finest strokes in "*Iphigenia*" are those where Clytemnæstra defends her daughter, and not those where Achilles defends his mistress.

In "*Sémiramis,*" the design was to have exhibited a spectacle even more affecting than that in "*Mérope,*" with all the pomp of the ancient Greek theatre. It would be a melancholy consideration to reflect, that after our great masters had surpassed the ancients in almost every part of tragedy, we should fall short of them in our representations of it; but on our stage, one of the greatest obstacles to any grand and pathetic action is the number of spectators that crowd in with the actors; an indecency which caused remarkable confusion on the first night of "*Sémiramis.*" The first actress from London was present at the representation, and was astonished: she could not conceive how any people in the world could be such enemies to their own pleasures, as to spoil a sight which they might have enjoyed. This abuse was corrected the ensuing night, during the run of "*Sèmiramis,*" and might easily have been terminated. We may think lightly of it if we please, but an inconvenience like this is sufficient to deprive us of a number of excellent productions, which I have no doubt would have appeared, if we had kept our stage free, proper for action, and such as it is in all other parts of Europe.

But this is most certainly not the only evil which calls for a remedy among us: I cannot sufficiently

express my astonishment and concern at the little care which we take in France to make our theatres worthy of the excellent performances represented in them, and of the nation which encourages them: surely *"Cinna"* and *"Athalie"* deserve a better place than a tennis-court, with a few vile decorations at the top, in a bad taste, and where the spectators are placed without any order or decorum—some on the stage itself, others below in what they call the parterre, where they are crowded and pressed together in the most indecent manner, throwing themselves sometimes one upon another, as if there were an insurrection of the populace — while as far north as we can well travel, our dramatic works are exhibited in theatres a thousand times more magnificent, and with much more decency and decorum.

But above all, how far do we fall short of that good sense and kind taste, with regard to everything of this kind, which reigns throughout Italy! It reflects shame and disgrace on us to suffer these relics of barbarism to remain in a city so large, so well-peopled, so rich, and so polished as Paris is; while, at the same time, a tenth part of what we expend every day in trifles, as costly as they are useless, might enable us to raise public monuments of every kind that would render it as magnificent as it is populous, and one day perhaps place it on a level with Rome itself, which is our model in everything. This was one of the great designs of the immortal Colbert. I flatter myself you will pardon this digression and attribute it to the love I bear to the arts and to my country. I am not without hopes,

that one day or other, our magistrates may be inspired with the noble ambition of imitating the magistrates of Athens, Rome, and modern Italy.

A theatre, built according to the best ancient rules, should be very extensive; should represent a part of some public place—the peristyle of a palace, or the entrance to a temple; and should be so contrived, that one person of the drama, though seen by the spectators, might not be seen by the other actors, if at any time there should be an occasion for concealing him: it should be made so as to deceive the eye, which is the first thing to be considered: it should be capable of exhibiting the greatest pomp and splendor imaginable: every spectator should see and hear equally well in whatever part he was seated. But how can this be ever expected on a narrow stage, in the midst of a crowd of young fellows, who will scarce leave the actors ten feet space? Hence it arises, that most of our plays are nothing but long discourses; all theatrical action is lost, or if practised, appears ridiculous. This abuse remains, like many others, because it is established; and for the same reason that we do not pull our houses down, though we know them to be badly built. A public nuisance is seldom removed but at the last extremity. When I speak of theatrical action, I mean dress, ceremony, assemblies of the people, incidents and events necessary to the piece; and not any of those shows frequently exhibited, rather childish than grand, the resources of art to supply the deficiencies of the poet, and amuse the eye when they are incapable of charming the ear,

or moving the heart. I saw a play in London, wherein was represented the coronation of a king of England with all the exactness imaginable: a knight, armed at all points, entered on horseback on the stage. I have often heard people telling strangers, "O the charming opera that we have been at! We saw above two hundred guards on the full gallop." These gentlemen had no idea that four good verses in a piece were better than a troop of horse. At Paris we have a company of strollers, who, seldom having anything of real merit to represent, entertain us with fireworks; but many years ago, Horace, who had perhaps more taste than any of the ancients, finely ridiculed all those fooleries that bewitched the vulgar.

Esseda sestinant, pilenta, petorrita, naves;
Captivum portatur ebur, captiva Corinthus.
Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus;
Spectaret populum ludis attentius ipsis.

You will perceive, my lord, from the foregoing observations, that it was a pretty bold undertaking to represent "*Sémiramis*" assembling the several orders of the state, and declaring to them her intended marriage; the ghost of Ninus, coming out of the tomb to prevent the incest, and revenge his own death; "*Sémiramis*" entering the mausoleum, and returning from it, wounded by her son, and just expiring. There was reason to fear that a spectacle of this kind would be disagreeable to many; and in effect so it was; for three parts of those who frequent the theatre, and were used to amorous elegies, combined together against this new species of

tragedy. We are told that formerly, in a city of ancient Greece, rewards were proposed for those who could invent any new pleasure: the direct contrary happened with regard to "*Sémiramis.*" Whatever efforts were made, notwithstanding, to suppress this species of the drama, which has in it all the terror of true tragedy, they could not succeed: it was echoed on every side, both in writing and conversation, that apparitions were childish things to be produced before a refined and sensible people. But why so? did not all antiquity believe in them, and shall we not conform to antiquity! Has not our religion itself given a sanction to these extraordinary strokes of providence? and is it, notwithstanding, ridiculous and absurd to repeat them?

The Roman philosophers had no faith in ghosts in the time of the emperors, and yet young Pompey raises one in the "*Pharsalia.*" The English have certainly no more belief in spirits than the Romans had, and yet they see every day with pleasure, in the tragedy of "Hamlet," the ghost of a king, who appears nearly the same as the apparition of Ninus did at Paris. I am at the same time far from justifying the tragedy of "Hamlet" in every respect; it is a gross and barbarous piece, and would never be borne by the lowest of the rabble in France or Italy. Hamlet runs mad in the second act, and his mistress in the third; the prince kills the father of his mistress and fancies he is killing a rat; and the heroine of the play throws herself into the river. They dig her grave on the stage, and the grave-diggers, holding the dead men's skulls in their hands,

talk nonsense worthy of them. Hamlet answers their abominable stuff by some whimsies not less disgusting; during this time one of the actors makes the conquest of Poland. Hamlet, his mother, and father-in-law, drink together on the stage: they sing at table, quarrel, beat and kill one another: one would think the whole piece was the product of the imagination of a drunken savage: and yet, among all these gross irregularities, which make the English theatre even at this day so absurd and barbarous, we find in "Hamlet," which is still more strange and unaccountable, some sublime strokes worthy of the greatest genius. It seems as if nature took pleasure to unite in the head of Shakespeare all that we can imagine great and forcible, together with all that the grossest dullness could produce of everything that is most low and detestable.

It must be acknowledged, that, among the beauties that shine forth in the midst of all these horrid extravagancies, the ghost of Hamlet's father is one of the most striking: it has always a strong effect on the English — I mean, on those who are the best judges and are most hurt by the irregularity of their old theatre. This ghost inspires more terror, even in the reading, than the apparition of Darius in the *"Persians"* of Æschylus: and why does it? because Darius, in Æschylus, only appears to foretell the misfortunes of his family; whereas, in Shakespeare, the ghost of Hamlet appears to demand vengeance, and to reveal secret crimes. It is neither useless, nor brought in by force, but serves to convince mankind, that there is an invisible

power, the master of nature. All men have a sense of justice imprinted on their hearts, and naturally wish that heaven would interest itself in the cause of innocence: in every age, therefore, and in every nation, they will behold with pleasure, the Supreme Being engaged in the punishment of crimes which could not come within the reach of human laws: this is a consolation to the weak, and a restraint on the insolence and obstinacy of the powerful.

——— Heaven
Will oft suspend its own eternal laws
When justice calls, reversing death's decree,
Thus to chastise the sovereigns of the earth,
And terrify mankind ———

Thus Semiramis speaks to the high priest of Babylon, and thus the successor of Samuel might have spoken to Saul, when the ghost of Samuel came to tell him of his condemnation.

I will go still further, and venture to affirm, when an extraordinary circumstance of this kind is mentioned in the beginning of a tragedy, when it is properly prepared, when things are so situated as to render it necessary and even looked for and desired by the spectators; it ought then to be considered as perfectly natural: it is at the same time sufficiently obvious, that these bold strokes are not to be too often repeated.

I most certainly would not, in imitation of Euripides, make Diana descend at the end of the tragedy of *"Phædra,"* nor Minerva in the *"Iphigenia"* in Tauris; nor would I, as Shakespeare has done, bring in the evil genius of Brutus appearing to him in his

tent: I would never make use of such resources, except when they could raise terror and at the same time carry on the business of the play. I could wish, moreover, that the intervention of these supernatural beings should not appear absolutely necessary: with regard to this I must explain myself: If the plot of a tragedy is so intricate and perplexed, that we can in no way disentangle ourselves without the help of a prodigy, the spectator perceives the distress the poet is in, and consequently, the weakness of his resource: he only sees a writer who has made a false step, and is put to his shifts to recover himself: the more astonishing it is, the more the design appears.

But I will suppose the author of a tragedy had it principally in view to inform mankind that God sometimes punishes extraordinary crimes by extraordinary means; I will suppose that his piece was so artfully conducted, that the spectator every moment expected the ghost of an assassinated king demanding vengeance, though the appearance was by no means necessary to the clearing up of an unnecessary plot. I say that, thus circumstanced, a prodigy of this kind, supposing it to be well managed, would have a great effect, in any language, age, or country whatever.

Such is, pretty nearly, the conduct of "*Sémiramis*"— those beauties excepted with which it was not in my power to adorn it. From the very first scene we perceive that everything must be done by the intervention of divine power; and, from act to act, everything turns on this particular notion. It

is an avenging God who inspires Semiramis with that remorse which she would never have felt in her prosperity, if the voice of Ninus himself had not terrified her in the midst of all her triumphs: the same God, by that remorse which He had inspired, prepares the way for her punishment; and hence arises the whole instructive moral of the piece. The design of the ancient tragedies was generally to establish some great maxim or sublime truth: thus Sophocles finishes his *"Œdipus"* with observing, that no man can be called happy before his death; and in *"Sémiramis"* the moral is contained in these verses:

> There are crimes
> Offended heaven never will forgive.

This maxim is more important than that of Sophocles: but what instruction, the reader perhaps may object, can arise to the generality of mankind from a crime so uncommon, and a punishment still more extraordinary? I acknowledge, that the catastrophe of Semiramis cannot often occur, but what happens every day may be met with in the last verses of this piece;

> ——— remember that our secret crimes
> Are witnessed by the gods ———

There are few families on earth where this may not be sometimes applied: with regard to particulars of this kind, tragical subjects, that are ever so much above the fortunes of common people, have a real respect to and connection with the manners of all mankind.

I might indeed apply to *"Sémiramis,"* the moral

with which Euripides finishes his *"Alcestis,"* a piece wherein the marvellous has a much greater share than in mine, namely: that the gods employ the most wonderful and astonishing means in the execution of their divine decrees, and that the great events which they bring about, surpass the understandings of men.

Because, my lord, and only because this little work of mine breathes the purest and most severe morality, I have taken the liberty to address it to your lordship. True tragedy is the school of virtue, and the only difference between a refined theatre and books of morality is, that the instruction of the former is all in action, that it is more interesting, and heightened by the charms of an art invented to make earth and heaven happy, and which was therefore truly called the language of the gods. You, my lord, who possess this talent with so many others, will, I doubt not, pardon me this long detail, on a subject which perhaps has never yet been thoroughly understood; but which would no longer be obscure, if your lordship would deign to communicate to me those lights into antiquity, of which you have so perfect a knowledge.

THE POLITICAL TESTAMENT OF CARDINAL ALBERONI.

After so many testaments which the public have rendered void and ineffectual, that of Cardinal Alberoni, at last, makes its appearance. I heartily wish that the cardinal had given the editor a place in his testament. This editor or author must, doubtless, know the world too well not to be sensible that a good legacy, which makes a man live in ease and affluence, is better than a thousand political speculations. A writer composes a fine book, full of the most profound reasoning, on the ruinous commerce of Europe with the East Indies: a merchant, with a stroke of his pen, sends a commission thither without reasoning about effects; gains an immense fortune; and does not read the book. The case is the same in politics: a man of genius and leisure forms projects to change the face of Europe: those who govern follow their old track, without so much as inquiring whether any projects have ever been formed.

Abbé de Bourzeys, afraid that he should not be read, boldly assumed the name of the Cardinal de Richelieu. Others have taken the names of Mazarin, of Colbert, of Louvois, and of the duke of Lorraine. All these testaments are composed in the style of Crispin, who takes the nightgown and the name of Géronte in the "Universal Legatee." It is evident, at first sight, that Géronte is not the author of that testament; we soon discover it to be the work of Crispin.

It must be owned, indeed, that the testament of Cardinal Alberoni is not composed by a Crispin: it is written by a man of no inconsiderable share of knowledge; but he must not pretend to make the world believe that this testament is really the work of the cardinal. In vain does he endeavor in his preface to elude the law which I enforced: that this single word, "The Testament of a Minister," lays the author under an indispensable obligation to deposit the original of the work in the public archives, or to prove the authenticity of it in some other way equally satisfactory.

If this law is violated, the public have a right to exclaim against the imposition. In matters of so great importance we are bound to convince the world that we act fairly and honestly. When I printed the "Anti-Machiavelli" at The Hague, I deposited the original copy in the town house, where it still remains. The author, indeed, does not pretend, that the "Testament of Cardinal Alberoni" is the work of that minister: he only says, that it contains his intentions; that it is a collection of some of the cardinal's thoughts, to which the editor has joined his own; by which means the work may become doubly valuable. Call it a Testament, or not, as you please, it is of no consequence. The titles of books are like those of men in the eyes of a philosopher; he judges of nothing by titles.

Whether it be Cardinal Alberoni or his interpreter that advises the king of Spain to encourage agriculture, it is certainly a very good advice, and his majesty ought to follow it, whether it come from a

minister, or a farmer. The author proposes to cultivate the lands in Spain by the hands of the negroes. And why not? These lands, which want laborers, still accuse that unhappy king, who deprived them of the hands of the Moors, under whom they were fertile. The deserts of Prussia, cultivated by foreigners, are a reproach to the lands of Castile.

Few men are better acquainted with Spain than this author. One would almost take him for the minister of Philip V. or for him who was the companion of his retreat and his unhappy friend — if indeed one can be the friend of a king. He enumerates all the causes to which the depopulation of Spain is owing; but, methinks, he is in the wrong not to reckon among these causes the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors, and the many colonies transplanted into America. The emigration of the Protestants from France is hardly perceptible. But the reason is, that France contains about twenty-two millions of industrious inhabitants; whereas, in Spain there are scarcely above six millions of people, and their pride and laziness jointly contribute to stifle the spirit of industry. Take much from him that has little, and what remains? How repair these losses in a country where parents transmit to their children the disease that attacks the human species in its source, and where superstition buries nature in cloisters? I here make use of the term "Superstition," which the cardinal employs; for I would not willingly change his words. The author plainly proves that Spain is the country of grandeur and abuses. He does more: he points out the remedies.

The work has not been reviewed by the inquisitors. There are some countries in the world which require that a man should be six hundred miles from them before he can take the liberty of telling these useful truths.

In the seventh chapter we see a part of that immense plan which was formerly conceived by Cardinal Alberoni. This man, in 1707, was not known in Anet — the curacy of which he refused — by any other character than that of "*uomo faceto e piacevole*," who made excellent onion soups. He was then patronized by Campistron; and in 1718 he was going to turn the world topsy-turvy. I made mention of him in my history of Charles XII. I there did him justice; and he returned me thanks with so much the more gratitude, as he was then unfortunate. This project, which was just on the point of being carried into execution, was to arm the Ottoman Empire against Austria, and Charles XII. and the czar against England; to establish the pretender on the throne of Great Britain; to deprive the duke of Orleans of the regency of France; and to render Italy forever independent of Germany, after seven hundred years of subjection, or slavery, or submission. In prosecution of this scheme, an Italian body was formed, somewhat resembling the Germanic body. Don Carlos was to have Naples and Sicily; and his brother, Don Philip, Tuscany. Lombardy was to fall to the share of the dukes of Savoy. Mantua was to be added to the territories of Venice; and the dominions of the duke of Modena were to be more than doubled by the addition of Parma.

Views of the most extensive commerce came to the aid of these political regulations or disorders. The cannon-ball which killed Charles XII. overturned the whole project. But this shattered machine was strong enough, some time after, to place Don Carlos on the throne of the Two Sicilies by new expedients.

The author would have the pretender endeavor to obtain the sovereignty of Corsica, instead of making fruitless attempts upon the crown of England. He then proposes to him the vice-royalty of Majorca. Can these proposals come from Cardinal Alberoni?

Can it possibly be he who inveighs so bitterly against the memory of Cardinal de Fleury; and who says, that nothing was to be heard but the complaints and groans of the people during the administration of that minister? If it really be Cardinal Alberoni that speaks thus, he is either greatly prejudiced, or he is not so well acquainted with France as with Spain. He decries Cardinal de Fleury in everything, and degrades him below mediocrity. But when we travel from St.-Dizier to Moyenvic, we say: "It was the cardinal de Fleury that added all these territories to France; and what more could a great man have then done?" Cardinal Alberoni is become a very severe censurer since his death. His "Testament" is a satire.

He blames Cardinal Fleury for having favored the war of 1741, though it is well known that he was against it, and opposed it with all his might.

He blames the emperor Charles VI. for having

made his Pragmatic Sanction; but the daughter of that emperor, we believe, will be of a different opinion. He is for changing the constitution of Germany. In a word, he acts like a man who has lost his estate at play, and still taking pleasure in viewing the players, publishes aloud the mistakes he thinks he discovers.

Can it possibly be Cardinal Alberoni who thus judges the living and the dead? We know a marshal of France, who has acquired a great reputation by his grand projects, by the spirit of order and economy which he introduced, and by his genius and activity. The pretended testator treats him very severely. In my opinion, history should not speak of the living: she should imitate the judgments of the Egyptians, who never decided concerning the merit of their countrymen until they were no more. The characters of great men are always viewed in a false light during their lifetime. But had we an inclination to answer the bitter reproaches with which Cardinal Alberoni loads this illustrious Frenchman, we might say: Cease to reproach the marshal with exhausting the treasures of France, in his magnificent embassy to Frankfort, when Charles XII. was chosen emperor. Cease to represent Germany as jealous of this pretended profusion. The Spanish ambassador made as great a figure there as the ambassador of France. The duke de Ripperda had appeared at Vienna with still greater splendor; nor was it ever known that any nation was alarmed at the number of a plenipotentiary's domestics, or at the richness and magnificence of his plate. You were

certainly indisposed when you wrote this article; and you bestowed your malediction, at your dying hour, on a mere trifle. Your eminence was in a bad humor when you dictated the article in which you condemn, in a political view, the project of this general: you should not judge by the event. Men whose reputation with posterity will be higher than yours, because with an equal share of genius they had better fortune, have said that the plan which you think so chimerical, was of all others the most likely to succeed. In effect, what was this plan? It was to unite France, Spain, Prussia, Saxony, and Bavaria, to judge, sword in hand, the cause of the succession to the Austrian dominions. A young and victorious king had an army of a hundred thousand men, the best disciplined of any in Europe. Saxony had nearly fifty thousand. Two French armies, each consisting of about forty thousand men, were in the heart of Germany, and almost at the gates of Vienna. The Spaniards were going to fall upon Italy; and at that time, it hardly appeared that they had any enemies to contend with. They had even proposed to put other springs in motion, which history will one day bring to light. We ask, after all these preparations, if ever an enterprise had a better appearance? We ask, if this project was not a hundred times more plausible than yours? Small armies have sometimes been seen to overthrow mighty empires. Here two hundred and fifty thousand men attack a defenceless woman; and yet she maintains her ground. Own it, M. Cardinal, there certainly

is a Being above us who confounds the wisest schemes of mortal men.

You are but ill informed for a great minister, when you say, that this general whom you condemn, demanded a hundred thousand men from Cardinal Fleury. I can assure your eminence, that he demanded only fifty thousand to march to Vienna, and among these twenty thousand horse. He only obtained thirty-two thousand in all, of which but eight thousand were horse. But even these, with the troops of the allies, composed a force which nothing seemed capable of resisting, inasmuch as the enemy had not as yet assembled an army. On this point of history, I could inform your eminence of many things which you do not appear to know, and which would convince you that the man you affect to despise was very worthy of your esteem.

As I am still alive, I dare not use the same freedom as you who are dead and may say everything with impunity: but I may venture, at least, to give you a few particulars relating to the siege of Prague, which will make you change your opinion. You cannot deny that the sallies were real battles, and that the retreat was glorious.

I know not what harm the cardinal de Fleury, and the general you mention, may have done you; but it appears to me, sir, that a good Christian as you ought to have been, and a cardinal as you certainly were, should on his death-bed have been reconciled with his enemies. Your "Testament" seems to me to have been composed *ab irato;* a circumstance which alone is sufficient to lessen its authority.

This "Testament" will be more useful to politicians than to historians. The testator is far from falling into the absurd errors of the forger who assumed the name of the cardinal de Richelieu. This bungling forger, in making the greatest minister in Europe speak, at the very crisis of the war between the king of Spain and the emperor, says not a word of the manner in which France should have conducted herself with her allies and her enemies. It was a strange inconsistency to see the cardinal de Richelieu pass over in silence the negotiations and the interests of all the princes in order to talk of the university and taxes. In this "Testament" the case is quite the reverse. The author enters into the interest of all the potentates; assigns to each his particular share; disposes of the world at pleasure; and puts himself in the place of Providence. He talks of all that might have been done and of all that could possibly happen; his work is a collection of future contingencies.

There is not a simple or common thought in the whole of this "Testament." It is there said that, when the emperor Charles VII. was without dominions and without an army, he should have put the queen of Hungary under the ban of the empire. It would seem, however, that when a monarch passes such a sentence, he should have a hundred thousand bailiffs to publish it to the world.

For the rest, never did "Testament" contain more considerable legacies. The cardinal gives and bequeaths Bohemia to the elector of Saxony; the duchy of Zell to the duke of Cumberland; Tyrol

and Carinthia to the elector of Bavaria; Breisgau, with the Forest towns, to the duke of Deux-Ponts; and the duchy of Deux-Ponts to the elector palatine. This is not unlike the testament which Cerisantes, the Gascon, made at Naples in the time of the duke of Guise. He bequeathed to that prince his jewels and his gold plate, a hundred thousand crowns to the Jesuits, and the same sum to a hospital. He likewise founded a college and a public library. He had not wherewithal to defray the expenses of his funeral.

THE SOUL.

LET us suppose a dozen philosophers on an island, where they never saw anything besides the vegetable world. Such an island, and especially half a score or a dozen good philosophers, are, it is true, no easy matter to be met with; however, we may very well imagine them, and therefore the hypothesis is allowable. They admire that life which circulates through the pores and fibres of plants, which seems sometimes to be annihilated, and at others to revive again; and not being over and above well informed of the generation of plants, or in what manner they receive their growth and nourishment, they therefore call this the vegetative soul. "What do you mean by the term 'vegetative soul?'" someone will ask. "It is," answer they, "a word we make use of to signify that unknown spring by which all these operations are performed." "But," says some mechanic, "do you not see all this is done in a natural way, by means of weights, levers, wheels, and pulleys?" "No," say our philosophers, "by no means. There is something more in this sort of vegetation than mere matter and motion; there is besides a secret power with which all plants are endowed, by which they admit the sap that is necessary for their nourishment; and this power, which cannot possibly be explained by any laws of mechanism, is a gift which God has bestowed on matter, and whereof neither you nor I can comprehend the return."

After a good deal of wrangling, at length our philosophers discover the animals. "Aha!" say they, after a long scrutiny, "here are beings organized exactly as we are! They have certainly the gift of memory, and that frequently in a degree superior to ourselves. They have the same passions, too; they have knowledge or consciousness; they communicate their wants; and perpetuate their species exactly in the same manner, and as well as the best metaphysician of us all could have done." They proceed to the dissection of one of these beings, in which they find a heart and a brain. "What!" say they, "is it possible that the author of these machines, who makes nothing in vain, should have given them all the organs of sensation, merely to prevent their being in the least capable of sensation? The thought teems with absurdity. There is therefore most assuredly some attribute within them, which is properly what we call 'Soul,' for want of a better word; something which is capable of perception, and which is provided with a certain stock of ideas. The question is: What is this thinking principle? Can it be something entirely different from matter? Is it a pure unmixed spirit? or shall we say it is a being of a middle nature between that matter, whose properties we know not in any degree, and pure spirit, about which we are at least as much in the dark? or shall it be a property with which God endowed organized matter?"

Then they fall to making experiments on insects, as on earth-worms, or the polypus; they cut them into several portions, and are astonished, after some

little time, to see new heads grow out of each single part; the same animal reproduces itself, and draws from its very destruction the means of multiplying its species. Has it several souls, which wait to animate these parts so produced, when the head shall have been severed from the original trunk? They resemble the trees which shoot out branches, and which reproduce their like from their wounds. Can these trees have several souls, too? This is by no means likely; it is therefore probable that the souls of these beasts are of another species than that to which we gave the name of "vegetative soul" in plants; it must therefore be a superior faculty, with which God has designed to animate certain portions of matter; it is a new proof of His power, and affords new matter of adoration.

Some person equally overbearing and false in his reasonings, happens to hear this discourse, and says: "You are a set of impious wretches, whose bodies ought to be burned, for the good of your souls, for denying man's immortality." Our philosophers are struck with such unheard-of language, and look at one another in amazement; one of them answers in a mild and placid tone of voice: "Why in such haste to burn us? What reason can you have to think that we hold that cruel soul of yours to be mortal?" "Because you believe," replies the other, "that God has given these brutes, who are organized as we are, the faculty of forming ideas and sentiment. Now you know that the souls of brutes perish with them; therefore you must certainly hold that the souls of men perish also."

The philosopher answers: "We are far from pretending to any certainty that what we call 'soul' in the brutes perishes with them; we are well assured matter never perishes at all; and we are of opinion that it is possible God may have endowed animals with somewhat that may retain to all eternity, if God so please, the faculty of forming ideas. We are very far from asserting that the thing is really and certainly so; it belongs not to man to be so confident of himself; but we dare not set bounds to the power of the Deity. We say it is extremely probable that the brutes, which are mere matter, may have received from Him a certain portion of intelligence. We discover daily certain properties of matter; that is to say, so many gifts of the Deity, whereof we had no manner of conception. We at first defined matter to be an extended substance; afterward we discover that we should have added solidity; some time after we knew that this matter had a certain power, or force, which is called 'inert force,' or '*vis inertiæ*'; after which again we were quite astonished to be reduced to the necessity of acknowledging that matter gravitates.

"Upon our attempting to push our inquiries still further, we were forced to own that there were beings resembling matter in some points, but which are likewise without certain attributes with which matter is sometimes endowed. The elementary fire, for instance, acts on our senses as well as other bodies, yet it tends not to one common centre as they do; on the contrary, it diverges from the centre in straight lines toward all sides. It appears con-

tradictory to all the laws of attraction and gravity, to which the other parts of matter are subject. Optics has mysteries altogether unaccountable, and for which it is impossible to assign any reason, but by hazarding the supposition that the rays of light penetrate each other. There is undoubtedly some property in light, which distinguishes it from all the other known parts of matter: it would seem that light is a kind of middle substance between bodies and the other kinds of entities, of which we are entirely ignorant. It is very probable that those other species of matter are themselves a certain middle rank which leads to other creatures, and that there may be, in this manner, a chain of substances which rise to infinity. *'Usque adeo quod tangit idem est, tamen ultima distant.'*"

This idea seems to us worthy of the greatness of God, if any ever was or can be so. Among these substances He might no doubt have chosen one, in order to place it in our body, which is known by the name of "the human soul"; the sacred books which we have read tell us this soul is immortal. Reason in this point agrees with revelation; for how is it possible that any substance should perish? And if all nature is destroyed, yet being must ever exist. We cannot conceive such a thing as the creation of a substance; and it is equally impossible for us to form any idea of its annihilation. But we dare not venture to assert that the Sovereign Lord of all things may not also have given sentiment and perception to that which is called matter. You are perfectly sure the essence of your soul is thought,

which is what we are by no means so positive of; for on examining a fœtus, we are at a loss to imagine that its head can possibly be so well stored with ideas, and are quite dubious, that in the case of a deep and perfect sleep, or in a complete lethargy, there is any such thing as meditation. Thus it appears to us, that thought may be, not the essence of the thinking substance, but a gift which the Creator may have given those we call thinking beings. All this has created in us a doubt, that, were He so pleased, He might endow a single atom with this faculty, and preserve this atom to eternity, together with this gift, ordering both or either at His pleasure. It is less difficult to conceive how matter may be rendered capable of thinking than to divine how any substance whatever should think. You have no ideas, except as it was the will of God you should enjoy this faculty; why then would you hinder Him from bestowing this quality on other species of beings? Can you be daring enough to believe that your soul is exactly of the same substance with those beings which approach nearest to the Deity? There is abundance of reason to think that they are of a very superior order; and that consequently God has designed to endow them with a faculty of thinking infinitely superior and more beautiful, in the same manner as He has granted a very moderate measure of ideas to brute animals, which are of an order inferior to you. I am utterly ignorant how I live, or how I bestow life, and you require me to comprehend how I come by ideas: the soul is as it were a clock which God has given us to regulate, but

without telling us of what sort of substance the mainspring of it is formed.

Is there anything in all this from which it can be inferred that our souls are mortal? Nay, further, we think as you do with respect to that immortality which the Gospel announces; but at the same time we hold ourselves too ignorant to be able to affirm, that God has not power to bestow thought on whatever being He pleases. You set bounds to the power of the Creator, which is beyond all bounds, and we stretch it as far as His existence. You will forgive us if we hold Him almighty, as we forgive your having restrained His power. You are certainly well informed of what He is capable of doing, while we pretend to know nothing of the matter. Let us, therefore, live in peace like brothers who adore one common father; you as becomes people possessed of souls at once bold and well informed; and we like ignorant and cowardly spirits, as we certainly are. We have both but a span of existence to enjoy. Let us then enjoy it in peace, without falling together by the ears for quibbles and knotty questions, which will be better resolved on our entering that boundless ocean of eternity, which begins the moment our hour-glass is entirely spent.

TOLERATION;

AND THE MAXIM THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE THAT PHILOSOPHERS SHOULD BE PREJUDICIAL TO HUMAN SOCIETY.

THIS brutal person, unable to make a satisfactory reply, talked for a long time, and with great heat. Our poor philosophers in the meanwhile applied themselves to reading history, and after much study told the barbarian that he was unworthy to possess an immortal soul.

Friend, we read that throughout all antiquity matters went altogether as well as in our times; that there were even greater virtues, and that philosophers were never persecuted for matters of mere opinion; why then would you punish us for opinions we never held, and which have no existence but in your own distempered brain? We read that all antiquity believed matter to be eternal. Even those who discovered it to have been created let others enjoy their opinions in peace. Pythagoras might have been a cock, and his parents hogs; nobody had anything to say against it, while his sect was loved and revered by all mankind, except by cooks, and those who had any beans to dispose of.

The Stoics acknowledged God as much such another Deity as has been so rashly abandoned by the Spinozists;[1] yet the Stoics were the sect of all

[1] The famous Spinoza, the son of a Portuguese Jew, was born at Amsterdam in the last century, and has been branded as an atheist for maintaining that the whole

others that abounded most in heroic virtues, and enjoyed the greatest degree of credit among mankind.

The Epicureans made their gods resemble our canons, who maintain their *divine right* by a luxurious indolence, sipping their nectar and ambrosia in perfect peace, and giving themselves no sort of trouble how the world went. These Epicureans boldly taught the materiality and mortality of the soul. They were not the less regarded on that account. They were admitted into all offices of trust or honor, and yet their jumble of atoms did not occasion the least disorder in the world.

The Platonists, like the Gymnosophists, did not do us the honor to think such a being as God ever deigned to create us with His own hands. He had, according to them, left this servile office to subalterns called Genii, who committed a thousand disorders and blunders in the exercise of their function. The god of the Platonists was an excellent workman, who employed but bungling apprentices in his work here below. Yet men were not wanting in their respect for the school of Plato.

In a word, both with Greeks and Romans, so many sects, so many different moods or ways there were of thinking about the Deity, the soul, the past, and the future; yet none of all these sects were ever persecuted. They were all mistaken, a circumstance for which we are exceedingly sorry; yet were they

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universe, and all it contains, belongs essentially to the nature of God, considered as one only substance, of which thought and infinite extent are no more than the properties.

all peaceable and quiet, which confounds and amazes, because it condemns us, by showing, that most of the reasoners of this day are monsters, while those of antiquity were no other than human beings. They sang publicly on the stage at Rome, *"Post mortem nihil est; ipsaque mors nihil"*—"There is nothing after death; and death itself is but nothing." These sentiments rendered them neither better nor worse; and the world was as easily and as well governed as before; while a Titus, a Trajan, and a Marcus Aurelius swayed the world, like so many beneficent deities.

If we pass from the Greeks and Romans to the barbarous nations, let us stop a while among the Jews. Superstitious, cruel, and ignorant as this wretched people certainly were, yet they honored the Pharisees, who admitted the fatality of destiny, and the metempsychosis. They also respected the Sadducees, who absolutely denied the immortality of the soul, together with the existence of any manner of spirits, founding their dogmas on the law of Moses, which never makes the least mention either of rewards or punishments after this life. The Essenians, who held the opinion of fatality, too, and who never offered up any kind of victim in the temple, were still more revered than the Pharisees and the Sadducees; yet did none of their opinions occasion the least disturbance in government. There was reason, however, sufficient to promote cutting of one another's throats, burning and exterminating each other by turns, had they had the least inclination to divert themselves that way. O wretched

mortals! profit by these examples. Think for yourselves, and let others enjoy the privilege to do so, too. It is the sole consolation of weak minds in this short and transitory life of ours. What! shall you receive with politeness a Turk, who believes Mahomet made a voyage to the moon? You would be very careful how you would have disobliged Bashaw Bonneval, yet would you cut your brother Christian to pieces, because he believes God is able to have bestowed intelligence and thought on every creature.

In this manner spoke one of those philosophers; a second added: "Believe me, we ought never to admit such a thought as that any philosophical notion is capable of hurting the established religion of a country. Although our mysteries contradict our demonstration; yet they are not a whit the less revered by our Christian philosophers, who know that the objects of faith and of reason are of a very opposite nature. Never will philosophers be the founders of any religious sect: Why? Because they are without the leaven of enthusiasm. Divide the human race into twenty parts; nineteen are composed of such persons as maintain themselves by the labor of their hands, and who will hardly know that such men as Locke and Newton ever existed. In the remaining twentieth part, how few shall we find who read? And, even of those who do, twenty are readers of romances for one that studies philosophy. The number of those who study is infinitely small, and those few will never think of disturbing the peace of mankind.

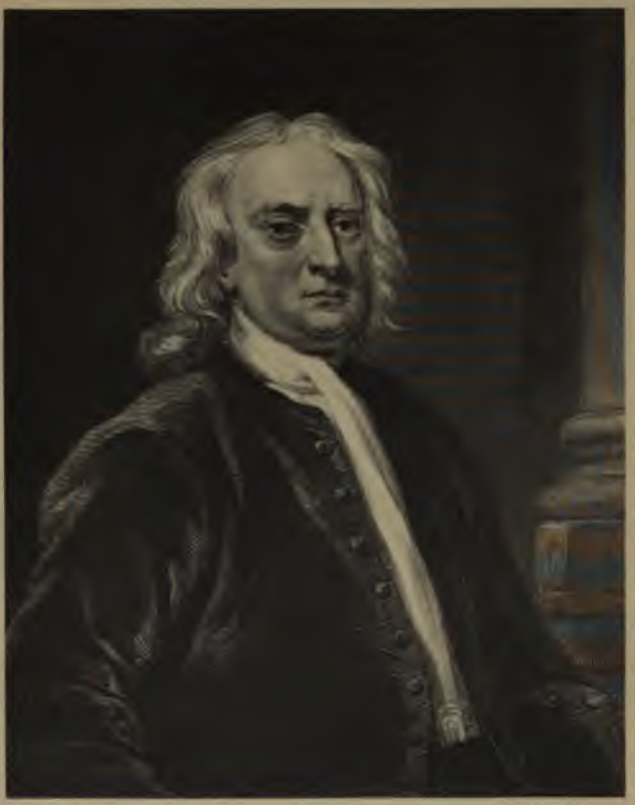
Who are they who have brought the flame of dis-

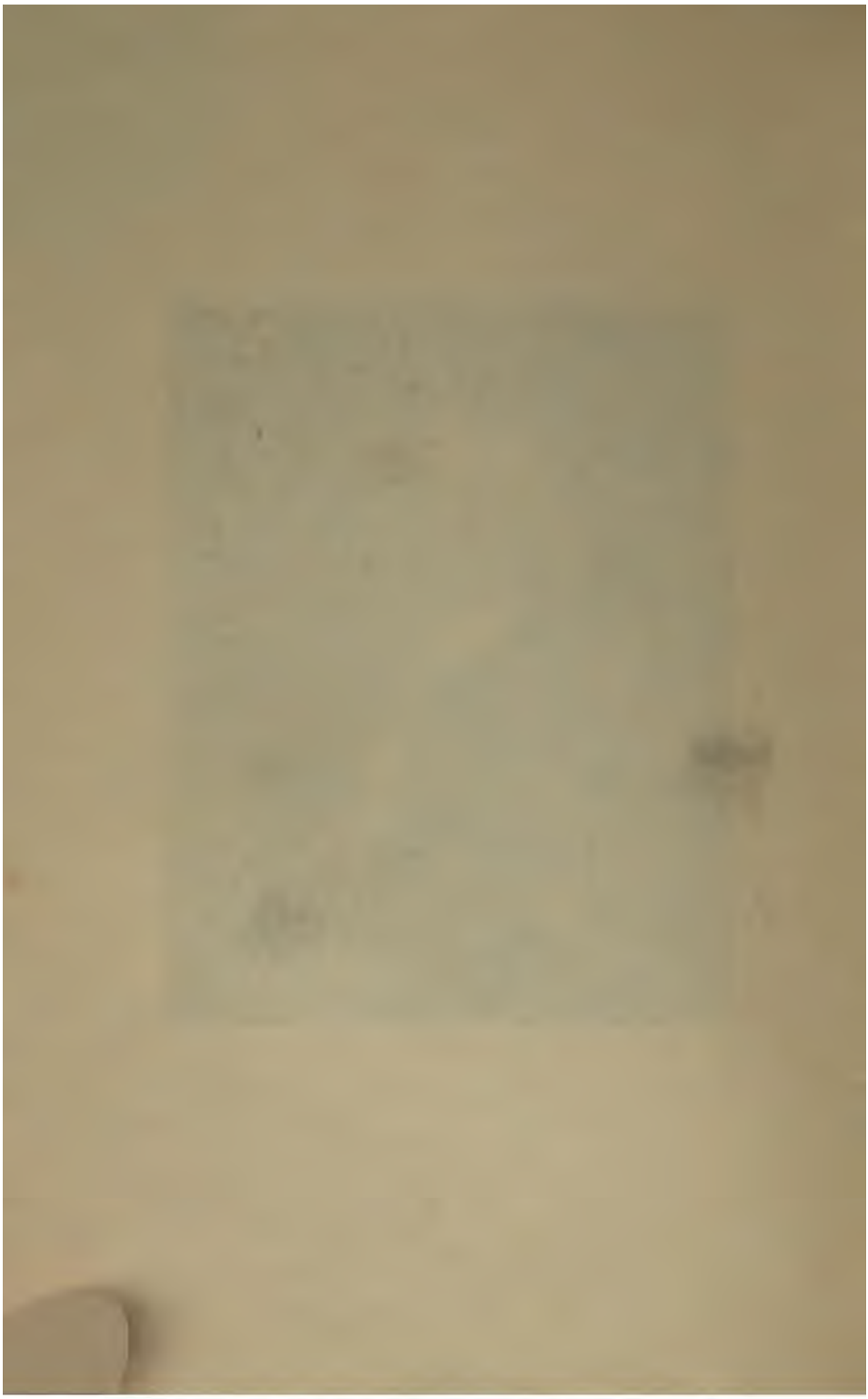
cord into their country? Was it Pomponazzi, Montaigne, Le Vayer, Descartes, Gassendi, Bayle, Spinoza, Hobbes, Lord Shaftesbury, the count de Boulainvilliers, the consul Maillet, Toland, Collins, Fludd, Woolston, Becker, the author who disguises himself under the feigned name of James Massey, the writer of "The Turkish Spy," of "The Jewish Letters," of "The Persian Letters," of "*Les Pensées Philosophiques*"? By no means; they were generally theologians, who, being at first actuated with the ambition of becoming heads of sects, had soon afterward adopted that of being chiefs of a party. What do I say? All the books of modern philosophy put together could not have made such a disturbance as the dispute of the Cordeliers formerly did, to determine the orthodox form of their sleeves and cowls.

DESCARTES AND NEWTON.

A FRENCHMAN, on his arrival in London, finds a total change in philosophy, as in everything else. He has just left the world, which abhors a vacuum, for one full of emptiness. At Paris we see a world composed of vortices of a subtile matter; at London there is no such thing in nature. With you it is the pressure of the moon that occasions the flux and reflux of the sea; among the English, it is the sea which gravitates toward the moon; so that, when you think the moon ought to give us high water, these philosophers think we ought to have quite the contrary, or low water. Unhappily for us, there is no coming at the truth of this except one had been able to examine the moon and the tides at the first moment of their creation. You will further remark that the sun, which in France passed for a mere cipher in this affair, counts in this country for a fourth part of the reckoning. Among your Cartesians, everything is performed by means of a certain impulse that is past all understanding; according to Mr. Newton, it is done by means of attraction, the cause of which is altogether as great a secret. At Paris, you figure to yourselves the earth much like a melon; at London it is flattened on both sides. Light, with a Cartesian, exists in the air; according to a Newtonian, it travels to us from the sun, and is about six minutes and a half in its passage. Your chemistry performs all its operations by means of acids and alkalies, and a certain portion of subtile

SIR ISAAC NEWTON





matter; in the English chemistry it is attraction which predominates.

Even the essence of things has undergone a total change. You agree neither about the definition of the soul, nor that of matter. Descartes asserts the soul to be the very same individual substance with thought; while Mr. Locke shows the contrary, with all the ease and perspicuity imaginable. Descartes maintains that matter is nothing but extension; Newton must needs add solidity. Here are terrible contradictions truly!

Non nostrum inter vos tantas componere lites.

This famous Newton, the destroyer of the Cartesian system, died in March, 1727. He lived honored by his countrymen, and has been venerated as a king who had been a benefactor to his people. He has been read with extreme avidity; and the eulogium of Newton, pronounced by Fontenelle in the Academy of Sciences, has been translated into English. They expected his declaration of the superiority of the English philosophy. But on finding that he not only deceived them in giving an account of this philosophy, but even that he compared Descartes with Newton, the whole Royal Society of London rose up in arms; and, far from acquiescing in his determination, they were very severe in their criticism on that piece. There were even some — and these not the greatest philosophers among them — who were shocked at the comparison, for no other reason than that Descartes was a Frenchman.

It must be acknowledged these two philosophers pursued a very different conduct, as well in regard

to their fortune and way of life as their philosophy. Descartes was born with a strong and lively imagination, which rendered him extremely singular in his private conduct of life, as well as in his method of reasoning. His fancy could not be restrained even in his philosophical works, in which we are constantly meeting with ingenious and lively turns of thought. Nature had almost made him a poet; and he actually composed for the queen of Sweden an entertainment in verse, which, for the honor of his memory, has not been printed. He followed for some time the profession of arms; and then, suddenly turning philosopher, at length he thought fit, in spite of the gravity of his character, to fall in love. He had by his mistress a daughter called Francine, who died young, to the great regret of the father. Thus he experienced all the vicissitudes incident to human life.

He was for a great while of opinion that, in order to philosophize in full liberty, it was necessary to fly the society of men, and especially to quit his country. He was certainly in the right, his contemporaries being utterly incapable of giving him any assistance, and more likely to do him prejudice than to be of any kind of advantage to him. He quitted France, therefore, in quest of truth, which was then persecuted on all sides by the wretched philosophy of the schools; but he found reason as little encouraged in the universities of Holland, whither he retired; for while they condemned in France only such propositions as were true, he was equally persecuted by the philosophers in Holland,

who did not understand it more than the former; and who, as they beheld his credit from a nearer point of view, for that very reason hated his person more; he was therefore obliged to leave Utrecht. He underwent the accusation of atheism, the last resource of calumny; and the man who had employed all the efforts of his natural sagacity to find out new proofs of the being of a God, was accused of denying His existence. So many persecutions necessarily supposed an extraordinary share of merit and reputation: and he was well known to enjoy a great share of both. Reason began to make some small progress in the world, and to penetrate the fogs and darkness of the schools, as well as to thin the mazes of popular prejudices. His name, at length, made such a noise that it was proposed to engage him to return into France, by rewarding him according to his merit. He was offered a pension of a thousand crowns. Trusting in this, he actually returned, paid the charge of the patent, was disappointed of his pension, and went back to philosophize in the solitudes of North Holland; while the great Galileo, at the age of fourscore, groaned away his days in the dungeons of the Inquisition, because he had demonstrated by irrefragable proofs the motion of the earth. At length our philosopher ended his life suddenly at Stockholm, his premature death being occasioned by a bad regimen, in the presence of some of the learned, who were his enemies, and in the management of certain physicians who bore him a mortal antipathy.

The career of Sir Isaac Newton was entirely dif-

ferent from his; his life, which lasted till nearly fourscore, was attended throughout with a happy tranquillity, honored and esteemed by his country. It was his great good fortune not only to be born in a free country, but in an age, too, in which all the fooleries of the schools had been banished, and reason alone was cultivated; thus mankind were more disposed to become his scholars than his enemies.

There is one very singular difference between his fortune and that of Descartes; which is this, that, in the course of so long a life, he was entirely free from the tyranny of passion, as he was from any kind of failing. He never had the least commerce with any woman; a circumstance of which I have been assured by the physician and surgeon in whose hands he died: in this we should certainly admire Newton, yet without blaming a contrary conduct in Descartes.

The public opinion in England in regard to the two philosophers of whom we are now speaking is, that the former was properly no more than a dreamer, while the other was a true sage. There are very few in London who read Descartes, whose works have, in effect, grown perfectly useless: there are also few who read Newton; but this is owing to its requiring much learning to be able to comprehend him. Yet everybody talks of them; and while the Frenchman stands excluded from any kind of respect or admiration, no praises are thought too high for the merit of the English philosopher. Some folks imagine that the exploding of that odd notion

of the horrors of a vacuum, the discovery of the weight and spring of the atmosphere, and the invention of telescopes are all of them owing to the sagacity of Newton; in short, he is in this country a second fabulous Hercules, to whose single valor the ignorant have ascribed the exploits of all the others.

In a critique published in London on Fontenelle's discourse, they have the boldness to assert that Descartes is no geometrician. Those who talk in this manner may be justly accused of turning against their benefactor. Descartes has made full as great progress from the point in which he found geometry to that to which he has carried it, as Newton has done after him. He was the first who taught the manner of finding the algebraic equation of curves. His geometry, which has, thanks to him, become so common since his time, was then thought so very deep that no professor would take upon him to explain it; and there was no one in France, but Fermat, or in all the United Provinces, besides Schouten, who understood it. He carried this geometrical and inventive genius with him into the study of dioptrics, which became an art entirely new in his hands; and if he has made considerable mistakes, it is because they who discover new countries cannot be supposed, at the first, to be alike thoroughly acquainted with every part of them. They who have followed him in it, owe him at least the obligation of the discovery. At the same time I am far from asserting that there are not abundance of mistakes in Descartes.

Geometry was a guide, which he had formed in some measure himself, and which would have conducted him with great certainty in his researches in physics: but at last, abandoning this guide, he was bewildered in the mazes of a system, which he adopted. From this time forward his philosophy became no other than an ingenious romance, and, at best, probable only in the eyes of those ignorant philosophers who were his contemporaries. He was mistaken with respect to the soul, the laws of motion, and the doctrine of light and color. He admitted innate ideas, invented new elements, created a world, and made man after his own fancy; so that it was said, with great justice, that man, as made by Descartes, was a perfect original, wholly different from that formed by God Almighty. He carried his metaphysical mistakes so very far as to pretend that two and two make four, because it was the will and pleasure of God it should be so; but I think I need hardly fear the imputation of partiality in saying that his very wanderings are somewhat amiable. It is true, he was deceived; but it was, at least, according to method, and his errors were the fruit of consequences very justly drawn from their premises. If he invented new chimeras in physics, we must at the same time acknowledge that he destroyed the ancient ones, and that he taught his contemporaries to reason, and even to fight him with his own weapons. In short, if he has not always paid in sterling coin, we owe him the obligation of having put down the bad.

Descartes bestowed one eye on the blind, which

enabled them to discover the blunders of antiquity as well as his own: the road he opened has, since his time, become infinitely frequented. Rohault's little book was formerly deemed a complete system of physics: at this day all the collections of the several academies of Europe do not form what may be called a good introduction to this science. By dint of sounding this abyss we have at last discovered it to be bottomless, and really infinite.

NEWTON.

NEWTON was first intended for the Church. He set out with the study of divinity, and retained a tincture of it to his dying day. He very seriously adopted the cause of Arius against Athanasius, and even went farther than he, as all the Socinians actually do. There are at present a great many of the learned of this opinion; I shall not venture to criticise this communion, as they make no distinct body. They are, moreover, divided among themselves; and several of them have brought their system to pure Deism, to which they have adapted the morality of Jesus Christ. Newton was by no means of the number of these latter, and differed from the English Church only on the point of consubstantiation, being orthodox in all the rest.

A proof of the sincerity of his faith is his writing a commentary on "Revelation." Here he finds it clear, to a demonstration, that the pope is Antichrist, and explains the rest of the book exactly as the other commentators have done. Possibly he meant, by this commentary, to console the rest of the human race for the great superiority he had over them. There are several who, having read the little treatise on metaphysics which Newton has placed at the end of his "*Principia Mathematica*," have met with something fully as obscure as the Apocalypse. Metaphysicians and theologians are much like those gladiators who were obliged to fight hoodwinked. But when Newton worked, with the bandage

removed from his eyes, on his mathematics, his sight pierced to the utmost limits of nature.

He invented the calculation of infinites; he has discovered and demonstrated a new principle, which sets the universe in motion. Light was wholly unknown before his time. There were only confused and false ideas of it, till Newton pronounced the most admirable *fiat,* and said, "Let light be known," and light was known.

He was the inventor of reflecting telescopes; and the first that ever was seen was the work of his own hands. He also demonstrated the reason why the power and focus of common telescopes can not be augmented. It was owing to this new telescope that a German took Newton for a mechanic, that is, for a spectacle-maker. *"Artifex quidam nomine Newton,"* says he, in some paltry book. But posterity has since sufficiently avenged the affront. He had still greater injustice done him in France, where he was held as a blundering trier of experiments; and because Mariotte made use of false prisms, the discoveries of Newton were exploded.

He was admired by his countrymen as soon as he had published and proved the truth of his theory by his newly invented instruments; but it was forty years before he was properly known in France. But to make amends, we had the fluted and ramose matter of Descartes, the little soft vortices of the reverend father Malebranche, and the system of M. Privat de Molière, which is not yet much inferior in value to the works of Poquelin de Molière.

There is no one of those in the least degree acquainted with Cardinal Polignac, who has not heard him say a number of times that Newton was certainly a Peripatetic, and that his colored rays and his attraction bordered on atheism. Cardinal Polignac joined to all those advantages he had received from nature a very great share of eloquence; he composed verses in Latin with a surprising and a happy facility; but he knew no other philosophy than that of Descartes; all of whose arguments he had retained, just like so many dates. He had not yet become a geometrician, and nature had not formed him for a philosopher. He was an excellent judge of "Catiline's Conspiracy," or of "Æneid"; but by no means fit to decide on the merits of a Locke or a Newton.

When one considers that Newton, Locke, Clarke, and Leibnitz would have been persecuted in France, imprisoned at Rome, and burned at Lisbon, what are we to think of human reason? One would swear it was a native of England in the present age at least. In the time of Queen Mary there was a violent persecution on account of the proper way of pronouncing Greek, in which the persecutors were, as usual, in the wrong. They who put Galileo before the Inquisition were still more so; and every inquisitor ought to blush, from the bottom of his soul, at the sight of the sphere of Copernicus. Nevertheless, had Newton been born in Portugal, and had a Dominican friar happened to discover a heresy in his inverted ratio of the squares of the distances of

the planets, Sir Isaac Newton had certainly walked in procession in his *sanbenito* [1] at some *auto-da-fé*.

It has been often asked how it comes to pass that they who, by their function, should be learned and humane, have so commonly proved to the last degree ignorant and implacable. Their ignorance was wholly owing to their having studied too closely, and too much; and their unrelenting cruelty was occasioned by the consciousness that their wretched learning was the just object of the contempt of true philosophers. Notwithstanding, those very inquisitors who had the effrontery to condemn the system of Copernicus not only as heretical but as absurd, had not the slightest grounds of apprehension from that system. Although the earth performed her annual revolution around the sun, together with the rest of the planets, the Church would, for all that, have enjoyed both her revenues and her dignities. Even the ecclesiastical dogmas are in perfect safety, when impugned only by philosophers: all the academies under the cope of heaven are not able, with their utmost efforts, to make the smallest revolution in the common creed of a nation, let its tenets be never so absurd. From what source, then, arises this pious rage which has so often inflamed the disciples of Anitus against those of Socrates? It is because the former are con-

[1] This is a corruption of *sacco benito*, the sackcloth worn by penitents in the primitive church. It is now the name given to the scapulary, or broad piece of cloth marked with the sign of the cross, put upon convicted heretics when they are brought from the Inquisition to the stake.

scious that they merit and enjoy the sovereign contempt of the latter.

I had a notion in my younger days that Newton had made his fortune by his extraordinary merit. I made no doubt that both court and city at London had created him, with one common consent, chief manager and supreme director of the coin of the kingdom. I was herein greatly mistaken; Sir Isaac Newton had a pretty niece, called Mrs. Conduite, who had the good fortune to please the lord high treasurer, Halifax.[1] Had it not been for this handsome niece, his doctrine of gravitation and infinitesimals had been wholly useless to him, and he might have starved with all his talents.

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[1] The earl of Halifax was chancellor of the exchequer.

CHRONOLOGY,

AS REFORMED BY NEWTON, WHO MAKES THE WORLD YOUNGER THAN THE COMMON ERA BY FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.

I COME now to take notice of another work, more within the reach of the human mind; but which, nevertheless, discovers that creative genius which Newton displayed in all his productions. This is his system of chronology, which is wholly new; for he appears to have been fated, in whatever subject he engaged, to make a total revolution in the commonly received opinions of the rest of mankind. Accustomed as he was to bring order out of confusion and to get beauty and regularity from the chaos of opinions he examined, he engaged in this work with a view to throw light upon those remote parts of history where fables and facts lay jumbled together, and to fix and ascertain a very doubtful chronology. One thing is past doubt: that there is scarcely a family, city, or nation which does not endeavor, by all possible means, to carry their origin as far back into antiquity as may be. Besides, the first historians are generally the least exact in fixing the dates of transactions. Books were then a thousand times scarcer than at present, and consequently were less obnoxious to criticism; they imposed on mankind with greater impunity; and it is unquestionable that facts have frequently been forged, it is more probable that dates have been so likewise. Upon the whole, it appeared to Mr. New-

ton that the world was younger by five hundred years than the accounts of the chronologers made it. He grounds his conjecture on the common course of nature, and on astronomical observations.

What is here meant by the common course of nature is the duration of each generation of men. The Egyptians were the first to make use of this vague way of computation, in their accounts of the first periods in their history. They reckoned three hundred and forty-one generations from Menes to Sethon; and having no fixed dates, they reckoned that three generations made up the space of one hundred years. Thus, from the reign of Menes to that of Sethon, they computed eleven thousand three hundred and forty years. The Greeks, before the institution of the Olympiads, followed the same method of computation as the Egyptians, and somewhat increased the duration of each generation by valuing each at about forty years. Now both Greeks and Egyptians were most egregiously out by this method of calculation. It is true, according to the common course of nature, that three generations make pretty nearly from one hundred to six-score years; but it is far from following that three reigns make up this number of years. Thus a man who should attempt to write a history without the assistance of fixed epochs, and having learned that in such a nation there had been a series of nine kings, would err considerably in allowing three hundred years for those nine kings. Each generation is about thirty years, and each reign about twenty, one with another. If we take the thirty kings who have reigned in Eng-

land from William the Conqueror to George I., their reigns will be found to amount to six hundred and forty-eight years, which, divided by thirty, the number of those kings, will allow about twenty-one years and a half for each reign. This is properly the common course of nature. The ancients were therefore deceived in making the duration of reigns and that of generations to be generally equal; they have consequently over-reckoned themselves, so that it is necessary to retrench this computation a little.

Astronomical observations seem to yield our philosopher still greater aid. He fights to advantage on his ground. The earth, you know, besides its annual motion which whirls it around the sun from west to east in the space of a year, has also a peculiar revolution altogether unknown till these latter ages. Its poles have a very slow retrograde motion from east to west, so that its position is every day changed with regard to the heavens. This yearly change of position, though insensible, becomes considerable in time, so as in seventy-two years to amount to one degree; that is to say, the three hundred and sixtieth part of the heavens. Hence, in the space of seventy-two years the vernal equinoctial colure, which, in the beginning of that period, passed through a certain fixed star, will at the end of it pass through a different fixed star. From this it follows that the sun, instead of being in that part of the heavens where the Ram was placed in the time of Hipparchus, is found to correspond to that part of the heavens where the constellation of the Bull is situated, and the Twins have succeeded to the place

in which the Bull then was. All the signs have changed places; although we have retained the way of speaking assumed by the ancients. We say, for instance, that the sun in the spring is in the Ram, by the same complaisance by which we say the sun moves.

Hipparchus was the first of the Greeks who perceived that some change happened in the constellations with regard to the equinoxes, or rather learned this circumstance of the Egyptians. Their philosophers attributed this motion to the stars, for at that time of day they were very far from imagining any such revolution in the earth. It was believed by them wholly immovable; they therefore created a heaven in which they stuck all the fixed stars, and to this heaven they gave a particular motion, which caused it to advance toward the east, while all the stars seemed to have a daily revolution from east to west. To this error they added a second, which was much more consequential. They believed that this imaginary heaven of the fixed stars advanced one degree toward the east in a hundred years. Thus they were mistaken in their astronomical calculations, as well as in their system of the universe: for instance, an astronomer would then have said that the vernal equinox was in the time of such an observer, in such a sign, and in such a fixed star; there has been a progress of two degrees from that observation till our time: now, two degrees are equal to two hundred years; therefore it follows that this observer must have lived two hundred years before us. It is therefore certain that an astronomer

who reasoned in this manner would have been wrong by about fifty years. This is then the reason why the ancient astronomers, thus doubly deceived, made their great year of the world — that is to say, of the revolution of the whole heavens — to consist of about thirty-six thousand years. But the moderns know that this imaginary revolution of the starry heavens is no more than the revolution of the poles of the earth, which it performs in twenty-five thousand nine hundred years. It will be proper to observe, by the by, that Mr. Newton, in determining the figure of the earth, has very happily explained this revolution.

All this being laid down, it remains, in order to ascertain chronology, to see at what fixed star the equinoctial colure now cuts the ecliptic in the spring, and to know whether some of the ancients may not have informed us in what point the ecliptic was cut in his time by the same equinoctial colure. Clemens Alexandrinus relates that Chiron, who was in the expedition of the Argonauts, observed the constellations in the time of that famous expedition, and fixed the vernal equinox in the middle of the Bear, the autumnal equinox in the middle of the Balance, our summer solstice in the middle of Cancer, and the winter solstice in the middle of Capricorn.

A long time after the expedition of the Argonauts, and a year before the Peloponnesian war, Meton observed that the point of the summer solstice passed through the sixth degree of Cancer.

Now each sign in the Zodiac consists of thirty degrees. In the time of Chiron the solstice was in

the middle of the sign, that is to say, in its fifteenth degree; a year before the Peloponnesian war, it was in the eighth degree; it had therefore been retrograde seven degrees; a degree then being equal to seventy-two years, it follows that from the beginning of the Peloponnesian war to the expedition of the Argonauts, there are but seven times seventy-two, which makes five hundred and four years, and not seven hundred years, as the Greeks say.

Thus, by comparing the state of the heavens at this day with the state in which it then was, we see the expedition of the Argonauts should have been placed nine hundred and nine years before Jesus Christ, and not about fourteen hundred years, and that consequently the world is younger by about five hundred years than was commonly imagined.

By this means all the epochs are brought nearer to us, and every transaction is made to happen later than it is said to have been. This system seems to me to be true, though I dare not take upon me to say whether it will be adopted by the multitude, or whether men will hence be brought to reform the vulgar chronology. The learned may possibly be of opinion that it would be doing too much honor to one and the same person to admit that he perfected physics, geometry, and history; this would be a kind of universal monarchy in literature, which self-love will not easily put up with. Thus, while the partisans of vortices and fluted matter attacked gravitation, which had been already demonstrated, the reverend Father Souciet and M. Fréret were writing against Newton's chronology before it was printed.

A DISSERTATION

BY DOCTOR AKAKIA, PHYSICIAN TO THE POPE.

The president of the Academy of Berlin was the famous Maupertuis, a French astronomer, mathematician, and philosopher, who owed his appointment in 1740 to Frederick the Great. He had accompanied an expedition to Lapland, at the instance of Louis XV., in 1736, to determine a degree of longitude. When Voltaire accepted the king's invitation and pension, Maupertuis felt himself superseded in the royal regard. A trivial incident fanned his jealousy into flame. About the same time there appeared a spiteful anonymous production in which this passage occurred: "If we search both ancient and modern history, we shall find no example of a prince who has given seven thousand crowns a year to a man of letters as a man of letters. There have been greater poets than Voltaire; there was never one so well recompensed. . . . The king of Prussia heaps favors upon men of talent for precisely the same reasons that induce a prince of Germany to bestow them upon a buffoon or a dwarf." The writer was one La Beaumelle, afterward scarified by Voltaire, who attributed the inspiration to Maupertuis.

The latter was tempted to publish a series of "Letters," which were the originating cause of the burlesque satire here presented. The learned president actually did propose the investigations which Voltaire's ridicule made it hard to regard seriously. He suggested that a hole should be dug down to the earth's centre, that one of the pyramids should be blown up, and that a city should be built in which the only language spoken should be Latin. Such immortality as pertains to the name of Maupertuis is due to this exquisite satire on "Dr. Akakia," the Greek equivalent for "the artless one."

NOTHING is more common in the present age, than for young and ignorant authors to usher into the world, under well-known names, works unworthy

of the supposed writers. There are quacks in every profession. One of these impostors has had the impudence to assume the name of the president of a most illustrious academy, in order to vend some drugs of a very singular nature. It is certain that the respectable president is not the author of the books which are ascribed to him; for that admirable philosopher, who has discovered that nature always acts by the most simple laws, and that she is ever sparing in the means she employs, would surely have spared his few readers the trouble of reading the same thing twice, first in his "Works," and then in his "Letters." At least one-third of the latter volume is copied literally from the former. This great man, who is so far removed from all suspicion of imposture, would never have published letters which were written to nobody, and far less would he have fallen into certain blunders which are excusable only in a young author.

Though I am fully convinced in my own mind that it is not regard for the interests of my profession that now induces me to speak; yet I may take the liberty, I hope, of finding fault with this writer for treating physicians as he does his booksellers. He proposes to starve us to death: he advises everyone to withhold his physician's fee, when unhappily the patient does not recover. "We do not pay," says he, "a painter that has made a bad picture." O, young man, how unjust and unreasonable you are! Did not the duke of Orleans, regent of France, pay dearly for the daubs with which Coypel adorned the gallery of the Palais Royal?

Does a client deprive his lawyer of his just fee because he has lost his cause? A physician promises his assistance, and not a cure. He does all that lies in his power, and is paid accordingly. What! would you even be jealous of the physicians?

What, think you, would that man say, who had, for instance, a pension of twelve hundred ducats for talking of mathematics and metaphysics, for dissecting a couple of toads, and having himself painted with a furred bonnet, should the treasurer accost him in this strain: "Sir, we must deduct one hundred ducats from your salary, for having written that there are stars in the shape of mill-stones; another hundred for saying that a comet will come and rob us of our moon, and even endanger the sun itself; and a hundred ducats more for having fancied that comets, composed entirely of gold and diamonds, will fall upon the earth: you are fined in three hundred ducats for having affirmed that the fœtus is formed in the womb of the mother by attraction; that the left eye attracts the right leg, etc. We cannot fine you in less than four hundred ducats, for having imagined that it is possible to discover the nature of the human soul by means of opium; and by dissecting the heads of giants, etc." It is evident that, by these means, the poor philosopher would lose the whole of his pension; and would he be content, think you, if, after this, the physicians should take it in their heads to laugh at him, and to affirm that rewards should be given to those only who write useful things, and not to such as are remarkable for nothing but an immod-

erate ambition of distinguishing themselves in the world?

This inconsiderate youth reproaches my brother physicians with being too timid and diffident in their researches. He says we are indebted to chance, and to savage, uncivilized nations for the only specifics that are known; and that the physicians have never discovered one of them. We must inform this stripling that it is chance alone that can teach us what medicines may be extracted from plants. Hippocrates, Boerhaave, Chirac, and Senac could never have guessed at first sight that the Jesuit's bark would cure a fever; that rhubarb was of a purgative, or poppies of a soporific nature. It is chance alone that can lead us to a discovery of the virtues of plants; and physicians can do no more than prescribe these medicines according to the condition of the patient. They have likewise invented several medicines by the assistance of chemistry. They do not promise to cure always; but they promise to do all in their power to mitigate the pains of their fellow-creatures. Did ever this witty youth, who has treated doctors with so much severity, perform such an important service to mankind as he, who, contrary to all expectation, brought back from the gates of death the marshal de Saxe, after the victory of Fontenoy?

Our young philosopher would have the physicians reduce themselves to a level with empirics, by banishing the theoretical part of their science entirely. What would you think of a man who should dissuade you from employing architects to build houses,

and advise you to make use of none but masons who cut stones at random?

He likewise gives us the wholesome advice to neglect the study of anatomy. In this case we shall have the surgeons on our side. We are only surprised that the author, who lies under some small obligations to the surgeons of Montpellier, for curing him of some diseases which require a very intimate knowledge of the interior parts of the head, and of other branches of anatomy, should be so extremely ungrateful.

The same author, little versed, it would appear, in history, speaking on the subject of making the punishment of criminals more useful to the state by trying experiments on their bodies, says that this scheme has never been carried into execution. He is ignorant, poor man, of what all the world knows, that in the reign of Louis XI. the experiment of cutting for stone was made for the first time in France, on the body of a man condemned to death; that the late queen of England caused them to try the inoculation of smallpox on four criminals; and that other examples of the same nature might be easily produced.

But, if our author is ignorant, it must be owned that he makes amends for that defect by the flights of a very singular imagination. He advises us, in his quality of physician, to employ the effects of the centrifugal force to cure an apoplexy, and would have us whirl the patient about as the boys do a whirligig. The notion, indeed, is none of his; but he gives it an air of novelty.

He advises us to cover the patient's body with resin, or to pierce his skin with needles. If ever he practises medicine and proposes such remedies, it is likely his patients will take his advice, and not pay their physician.

But what is very surprising is, that this declared enemy of the medical art, who would so unmercifully deprive us of our fees, proposes, by way of accommodation, to ruin the patients. He ordains — for he is despotic — that every physician should profess the cure of one disease only; so that, if a man has a gout, a fever, and a flux, sore eyes, and a pain in his ear, he must pay five physicians instead of one. But perhaps his meaning is, that each of us should have only a fifth part of the common fee; another instance of his malice. By and by, I imagine we shall hear of devotees being advised to have a particular director for every vice; one for a serious concern about trifles; one for jealousy, concealed under a severe and imperious air; one for the itch of forming cabals about nothing; and others for other vices: but let us not wander from the subject, but return to our brother physicians.

"The best physician," says he, "is he that reasons least." He seems to have adhered as strictly to this maxim in philosophy as ever Father Canaye did in theology; and yet, in spite of his hatred to reasoning, we can easily perceive that he has made some profound reflections on the art of prolonging life. In the first place, he agrees with all men of sense — and we sincerely congratulate him on agree-

ing with them for once — that our forefathers lived from eight to nine hundred years.

Having then discovered by the force of his own genius, and independent of Leibnitz, that "the full growth of a man should be fixed, not at the age of strength and manhood, but at the point of death," he proposes to ward off this point in the same manner as we preserve eggs, by hindering them from hatching. This, undoubtedly, is a most charming secret, and we would advise him to secure to himself the honor of the discovery in some hen-roost, or by a criminal sentence of some academy.

From this short account it plainly appears that if these imaginary letters were written by a president, it must have been by a president of Bedlam; and that they are, in fact, as we have already said, the work of a young man who has endeavored to set off his paltry production with the name of a philosopher respected, as is well known, over all Europe, and who has consented to have himself declared a "Great Man." We have sometimes seen at a carnival in Italy, Harlequin disguised in the garb of an archbishop; but we soon found it to be Harlequin by his manner of pronouncing the benediction: sooner or later, truth will prevail: this brings to my mind a fable of La Fontaine:

Un petit bout d'oreille échappé par malheur
Découvrit la fourbe et l'arreur.

Here we see the whole ears.

All things considered, we refer to the Holy Inquisition the book ascribed to the president; and we submit to the decisions of that learned tribunal,

in which, it is well known, physicians have the most implicit faith.

DECREE OF THE INQUISITION OF ROME.

We, Father Pancratius, etc., inquisitor for the faith, have read the dissertation of M. Akakia, physician in ordinary to the pope, without comprehending the meaning of the said dissertation, or finding anything in it contrary to the faith, or the Decretals. But we cannot say the same of the works and letters of the young anonymous author, who has assumed the name of a president.

After calling in the direction of the Holy Spirit to our assistance, we have found in the said works, that is, in the quarto volume of this anonymous author, many propositions rash, ill-sounding, heretical, or tending to heresy. We therefore condemn them collectively, separately, and respectively.

We especially and particularly anathematize the "Essay on Cosmology," in which the author, blinded by the principles of the children of Belial, and accustomed to blame everything, insinuates, contrary to the Holy Scriptures, that it is a fault in Providence to allow spiders to catch flies; and that there is no other proof of the being of a God than in Z equal to B C, divided by A plus B. Now these characters being drawn from the art of conjuring, and plainly diabolical, we declare them to be repugnant to the authority of the holy see.

And as, according to custom, we know nothing of physics, metaphysics, mathematics, etc., we have enjoined reverend professors of philosophy of the

College of Wisdom to examine the works and letters of the young anonymous author, and to give us a faithful account of the same. So help them God.

JUDGMENT OF THE PROFESSORS OF THE COLLEGE OF WISDOM.

1. We declare that the laws relating to the shock of bodies perfectly hard, are childish and imaginary, inasmuch as there are no bodies perfectly hard, though there are several hard minds, upon which we have in vain endeavored to make an impression.

2. The assertion that "the product of the space multiplied by the velocity is always a minimum," seems to be false; for this product is sometimes a maximum, according to the opinion of Leibnitz, and as may be easily proved. It would appear that the young author took only one-half of M. Leibnitz's ideas; and we, therefore, acquit him of the guilt of having ever comprehended one whole idea of M. Leibnitz.

3. We likewise adhere to the censure which M. Akakia, physician to the pope, and so many others, have passed on the works of this anonymous author, and especially on the "Venus Physique." We advise the young author, when he proceeds with his wife — if he has one — to the work of generation, not to think that the fœtus is formed in the womb by means of attraction; and we exhort him, if he commits the sin of the flesh, not to envy the lot of snails in the act of love, nor that of toads, and to be less ambitious of imitating the style of

Fontenelle, when riper years shall have formed his taste.

We come now to the examination of the "Letters," which, in our opinion, are doubly criminal, as they contain almost all that is to be found in the "Works"; and we exhort him not to sell the same goods twice under different names, because it is not consistent with the character of a fair trader, which he ought to maintain.

EXAMINATION OF THE LETTERS OF A YOUNG AUTHOR DISGUISED UNDER THE NAME OF A PRESIDENT.

1. It may not be improper, in the first place, to inform this young author that foresight in man is not called Foreknowledge; that the word "*Foreknowledge*" is sacred to God alone, and denominates that power by which he looks into futurity. He should be acquainted with the meaning of words before he sets himself to write. He ought to know that the soul does not perceive itself; it sees external objects, but cannot see itself; such is its present condition. The young writer may easily correct these trifling errors.

2. It is false that "the memory makes us lose more than we gain by it." We must inform this candidate for literary fame that the memory is the faculty of retaining ideas; that without this faculty we could not even compose a bad book, could hardly know anything at all, would not be able to conduct ourselves in any station of life, but would be left in a state of absolute ignorance and stupidity. We

would, therefore, recommend this young man to improve his memory.

3. We are obliged to declare that the following notion is ridiculous, to-wit: "That the soul is like a body which recovers its former state after having been put in motion; and that in the same manner the soul returns to its state of tranquillity or uneasiness, whichever of the two be most natural to it." The author has not expressed himself with accuracy. He probably meant to say that everyone returns to his natural character; that a man, for instance, after having forced himself to act the philosopher for a few days, returns to his ordinary trifles, etc. But such trivial truths as these deserve not to be repeated. It is the misfortune of young men to think that they are capable of giving an air of novelty to the most common things, by wrapping them up in obscure expressions.

4. The author is mistaken in saying that extension is no more than a perception of the mind. If ever he applies himself to the study of philosophy, he will find that extension is not like sounds and colors, which exist only in our sensations, as every schoolboy knows.

5. With regard to the Germans, whom he undervalues and treats as dunces in plain terms, he appears to us, in this particular, to be unjust and ungrateful: this is not merely to want knowledge, it is to want politeness. This young man may probably imagine that he is capable of inventing something after Leibnitz; but we will tell him that it is

not to him that we are indebted for the invention of gunpowder.

6. This author, we are afraid, may tempt some of his fellow-students to search for the philosopher's stone; for he says "in whatever light we view it, we cannot prove it to be impossible." He owns, it is true, that it would be a foolish thing for any-one to squander away his estate in such a research; but as in talking of the "sum of happiness," he says that we cannot demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion, which, however, many people profess, it may happen *a fortiori* that some men may ruin themselves in searching for the grand secret, as according to him, it may possibly be found.

7. We pass over several things that would weary the reader's patience, and are unworthy of the inquisitor's notice; but we believe he will be greatly surprised to hear that this young student is for dissecting the brains of giants six feet high, and of hairy men with tails, the better to discover the nature of the human mind; that he proposes to modify the soul with opium and dreams; and that he undertakes to produce large snakes from other snakes with dough, and fishes with grains of corn. We have taken this opportunity of diverting the inquisitor.

8. But the inquisitor will not laugh when he is informed that every man may become a prophet; for the author finds no more difficulty in seeing the future than the past. He avers that the arguments in favor of judicial astrology are as strong as those against it. He then assures us that the perceptions

of the past, the present, and the future differ only in the greater or less activity of the soul. He hopes that a little more heat and "exaltation" in the fancy may serve to point out the future, as the memory shows the past.

We are unanimously of opinion that his brain is exalted to a very high degree, and that he will soon develop into a prophet. We cannot as yet determine whether he will be one of the greater or lesser prophets; but we are much afraid that he will prove a prophet of evil, since even in his treatise on happiness, he talks of nothing but calamities. He says, particularly, that all fools are unhappy. We send our compliments of condolence to people of this character; but if his exalted soul has looked into futurity, did it not perceive something ridiculous in the prospect?

9. He seems to be desirous of going to the southern hemisphere, though, on reading his book, one would be tempted to think that he had just returned from thence; and yet he appears to be ignorant that it is a long time since the country of Frederick Henry, situated beyond the fortieth degree of southern latitude, was discovered: but we assure him beforehand, that if, instead of going to the southern hemisphere, he should resolve to sail in a direct line to the north pole, nobody will embark with him.

10. We must further inform him, that it will be extremely difficult to make, as he proposes, a hole that shall reach to the centre of the earth — where he probably means to conceal himself from the disgrace to which the publication of such absurd

principles has exposed him. This hole could not be made without digging up about three or four hundred leagues of earth; a circumstance that might disorder the balance of Europe.

To conclude, we entreat Doctor Akakia to prescribe to him some cooling medicine; and we exhort the author to apply himself to his studies in some university, and to be more modest for the future.

Should ever a company of philosophers be sent to Finland, to verify, if possible, by certain mensurations, the grand discoveries which Newton made by his sublime theory of gravitation and centrifugal force, and should he happen to be one of the number, let him not endeavor to be always raising himself above his companions, nor cause himself to be painted as levelling the earth with his single hand, as Atlas is represented supporting the heavens on his shoulders; as if, forsooth, he had changed the face of the universe, because he had taken his diversion in a town where there was a Swedish garrison. Let him likewise abstain from quoting the polar circle on every occasion.

Should any of his fellow-students propose to him in a friendly manner an opinion different from his; should he assure him that he is supported by the authority of Leibnitz, and of several other philosophers, and particularly show him a letter of M. Leibnitz, which the novice flatly contradicts, let not the said novice rashly imagine, and give out in every place, that his antagonist has forged a letter of M. Leibnitz, to rob him of the glory of being an original.

Let him not take an error into which he has fallen, upon a point of dynamics, which is of no use in practice, for an admirable discovery.

Should this companion, after having frequently shown him his work, in which he attacks him with equal prudence and politeness, and in which he even pays him compliments, commit it to the press with his consent, let him take care not to represent this work of his adversary as a crime of academical treason.

Should his companion repeatedly assure him that he has in his possession this letter of Leibnitz, as well as several others, which he received from a man who has been dead for some years, let not the novice basely take advantage of this circumstance, nor employ the same artifices as were used by a certain person against the Mairans, the Cassinis, and other true philosophers: let him not demand in such a frivolous dispute that the dead should rise from the grave to ascertain the authenticity of a letter of M. Leibnitz; but let him reserve this miracle to the time of his commencing prophecy; let him not embroil people in an insignificant quarrel, which the vanity of the author would fain render important; nor let him presume to engage the gods in a war of rats and frogs. Let him not write letter upon letter to a great princess, in order to silence his antagonist, and to tie up his hands, that so he may assassinate him at pleasure.

Let him not, in a paltry dispute on dynamics, summon, by an academical authority, a professor to appear within a month; nor let him condemn the

said professor of contumacy, as an invader of his glory, as a forger and falsifier of letters; more especially as it is certain that the letters of Leibnitz are genuine, and that those written under the name of a president were no more received by his correspondents than they were read by the public.

Let him not endeavor to deprive anyone of the liberty of a just defence; but let him remember that he that is in the wrong, and that endeavors to dishonor him that is in the right, in effect dishonors himself.

Let him be persuaded that all men of letters are equal, and we are sure he will gain by this equality.

Let him never be so foolish as to insist that nothing should be printed without his order.

Finally, we exhort him to be of a teachable disposition, to apply to the study of sound philosophy, and not to vain cabals; for what a scholar gains in intrigues he loses in genius, in the same manner as in mechanics, what we gain in time we lose in power. We have but too frequently seen young authors, who have begun by raising high expectations and publishing excellent works, and end at last by writing nothing but nonsense; because instead of able writers they wanted to be skilful courtiers, substituted vanity in place of study, and that dissipation which weakens the mind, in place of that recollection which strengthens it. They have been commended, and they have ceased to be commendable: they have been rewarded, and they have ceased to deserve rewards: they have endeavored to make a figure in the world, and their names have

been entirely annihilated: for when in an author a sum of errors is equal to a sum of ridiculous propositions, "his existence is equal to nothing."

HOW FAR SHOULD WE IMPOSE ON THE PEOPLE?

IT IS a question of great importance, however little regarded, how far the people, i. e., nine-tenths of the human race, ought to be treated like apes. The deceiving party have never examined this problem with sufficient care; and, for fear of being mistaken in the calculation, they have heaped up all the visionary notions they could in the heads of the party deceived.

The good people who sometimes read Virgil, or the "Provincial Letters," do not know that there are twenty times more copies of the "Almanac of Liège" and of the *"Courrier Boiteux"* printed than of all the ancient and modern books together. No one, surely, has a greater veneration than myself for the illustrious authors of these almanacs and their brethren. I know, that ever since the time of the ancient Chaldæans, there have been fixed and stated days for taking physic, paring our nails, giving battle, and cutting wood. I know that the best part of the revenue of an illustrious academy consists in the sale of such almanacs. May I presume to ask, with all possible submission and a becoming diffidence as to my own judgment, what harm it would do to the world were some powerful

astrologer to assure the peasants and the good inhabitants of the little villages that they might safely pare their nails when they please, provided it be done with a good intention? The people, I shall be told, would not buy the almanacs of this new astrologer. On the contrary, I will venture to affirm, that there would be found among your great geniuses many who would make a merit in following this novelty. Should it be alleged that these geniuses would form factions, and kindle a civil war, I have nothing further to say on the subject, but readily give up, for the sake of peace, my too dangerous opinion.

Everybody knows the king of Boutan. He is one of the greatest princes in the universe. He tramples under his feet the thrones of the earth; and his shoes — if he has any — are provided with sceptres instead of buckles. He adores the devil, as is well known, and his example is followed by all his courtiers. He, one day, sent for a famous sculptor of my country, and ordered him to make a beautiful statue of Beelzebub. The sculptor succeeded to admiration. Never was there such a handsome devil. But, unhappily, our Praxiteles had only given five clutches to his animal, whereas the Boutaniers always gave him six. This capital blunder of the artist was aggravated by the grand master of the ceremonies to the devil, with all the zeal of a man justly jealous of his master's rights, and of the sacred and immemorial custom of the kingdom of Boutan. He insisted that the sculptor should atone for his crime by the loss of his head. The

sculptor replied that his five clutches were exactly equal in weight to six ordinary clutches; and the king of Boutan, who was a prince of great clemency, granted him a pardon. From that time the people of Boutan were undeceived with regard to the devil's six clutches.

The same day his majesty needed to let blood. A surgeon of Gascony, who had come to his court in a ship belonging to our East India Company, was appointed to take from him five ounces of his precious blood. The astrologer of that quarter cried out that the king would be in danger of losing his life if he opened a vein while the heavens were in their present state. The Gascon might have told him that the only question was about the state of the king's health; but he prudently waited a few minutes; and then, taking an almanac in his hand, "You were in the right, great man!" said he to the astrologer of the quarter, "the king would have died had he been bled at the instant you mention: the heavens have since changed their aspect; and now is the favorable moment." The astrologer assented to the truth of the surgeon's observation. The king was cured; and by degrees it became an established custom among the Boutaniers to bleed their kings whenever it was necessary.

A blustering Dominican at Rome said to an English philosopher, "You are a dog; you say it is the earth that turns round, never reflecting that Joshua made the sun stand still." "Well! my reverend father," replied the other, "and since that time the sun has been immovable." The dog

and the Dominican embraced each other; and even the Italians were, at last, convinced that the earth turns round.

An augur and a senator, in the time of Cæsar, lamented the declining state of the republic. "The times, indeed, are very bad," said the senator; "we have reason to tremble for the liberty of Rome." "Ah!" said the augur, "that is not the greatest evil; the people now begin to lose the respect which they formerly had for our order: we seem barely to be tolerated; we cease to be necessary. Some generals have the assurance to give battle without consulting us; and, to complete our misfortunes, those who sell us the sacred pullets begin to reason." "Well, and why don't you reason likewise?" replied the senator, "and since the dealers in pullets in the time of Cæsar are more knowing than they were in the time of Numa, should not you modern augurs be better philosophers than those who lived in former ages?"

TITLES OF HONOR.

In reading Horace, I have observed this verse in an epistle to Mæcenas: *"Te dulcis amice revisam"*— "I will see you again, my dear friend." This Mæcenas was the second person in the Roman Empire; that is, he was a more considerable and a more powerful man than the greatest monarch now in Europe.

In reading Corneille I have remarked, that in a letter to the great Scudéri, governor of Notre Dame de la Garde, he thus expresses himself, when speaking of the cardinal de Richelieu: "The cardinal, your master and mine." This, perhaps, is the first time that such a compliment was paid to a minister, ever since there were ministers, kings, and flatterers in the world. The same Peter Corneille, the author of "Cinna," humbly dedicates that play to the sieur de Montauron, treasurer of Spain, whom he makes no scruple to compare to Augustus. I am sorry he did not call Montauron "Monseigneur."

It is said that an old officer, who was but little acquainted with the forms of vanity, having written to the marquis de Louvois, "Monsieur," and received no answer, wrote to him "Monseigneur," and still obtained none, because the minister had still the "Monsieur" at heart. At last he wrote to him: "To my God, to my God, Louvois;" and began his letter with this address: "My God, my Creator." Does not all this prove that the Romans were great and modest, and that we are little and vain?

"How do you do, my dear friend?" said a duke to a gentleman: "At your service, my dear friend," replied the other; and from that time his dear friend became his implacable enemy. A grandee of Portugal, conversing with a grandee of Spain, always called him "Your Excellency." The Castilian replied: "Your Civility"—*"Vuestra Merced";* a complimentary title given to those who have no real one. The Portuguese, piqued at this affront, called the Spaniard, in his turn, "Your Civility"; and then the other gave him the title of "Your Excellency." At last, the Portuguese, whose patience was quite exhausted, said to the other: "Why do you always give me the title of Civility, when I give you that of Excellency? And why do you call me Your Excellency, when I give you the appellation of Your Civility?" "Because," replied the Castilian, with great humility, "all titles are equal to me, provided there be no equality between you and me."

The vanity of titles was not introduced into the northern climates of Europe till the Romans became acquainted with the Asiatic sublimity. All the kings of Asia were, and still are, cousins-german to the sun and moon. Their subjects dare not lay claim to this alliance; and the governor of a province, who styles himself the "Nutmeg of Consolation, and the Rose of Pleasure," would be empaled should he pretend to be related, in the most distant degree, to the sun or moon. Constantine, I think, was the first Roman emperor that burdened the Christian humility with a string of pompous titles. It is true,

the title of god was given to the emperors before his time; but the word "god" had no such meaning then as we now affix to it. *Divus Augustus, Divus Trajanus,* meant no more than Saint Augustus, Saint Trajan. They thought the dignity of the Roman Empire required that the soul of its chief should go to heaven after death; and they frequently granted the title of Saint, or *Divus,* to the emperor, as an earnest of his future inheritance. It was nearly for the same reason that the first patriarchs of the Christian Church were called "Your Holiness"; an appellation given them to put them in mind of what they should be.

Some people will give themselves very humble titles, provided they are sure of receiving very honorable ones in return. An abbot who calls himself friar causes his monks to address him by the title of "My Lord." The pope styles himself "the Servant of the Servants of God." A good priest of Holstein, one day, wrote to Pope Pius IV.: "To Pius IV., the Servant of the Servants of God:" but going afterward to Rome to prosecute his suit, the Inquisition threw him into prison to teach him how to write.

Formerly none but the emperor had the title of Majesty: the other kings were called "Your Highness," "Your Serenity," "Your Grace." Louis XI. was the first king of France that was distinguished by the appellation of Majesty; a title, in reality, as suitable to the dignity of a great hereditary kingdom as to an elective principality: but the title of Highness was given to the king of France long

after his time, and we have still some letters, written to Henry III., in which he is addressed by this designation. The states of Orleans would not allow Queen Catherine de Medici to be called Majesty. By degrees, however, this last denomination prevailed. The name is indifferent; the power only is not so. The German Chancery, always invariable in its noble customs, still pretend that all kings ought to be distinguished by no other title than that of Serenity. In the famous Treaty of Westphalia, in which France and Sweden gave laws to the holy Roman Empire, the plenipotentiaries of the emperor never presented any Latin memorials in which "his Sacred imperial Majesty" did not treat with the "Most Serene kings of France and Sweden"; but the French and Swedes, on their part, did not fail to assert that their "Sacred Majesties of France and Sweden" had many causes of complaint against the "Most Serene emperor." At last all parties were made equal in the treaty. From that time the great sovereigns have been reckoned equal in the opinion of the people; and he that beats his neighbor is always sure to have the pre-eminence.

Philip II. was the first Majesty in Spain; for "the Serenity of Charles V." was exalted into Majesty only in virtue of his being emperor. The children of Philip II. were the first Highnesses, and they afterward became Royal Highnesses. The duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIII., did not take the title of Royal Highness till 1631, and then the prince of Condé took the title of most Serene Highness, which the dukes of Vendôme dared not

assume. The duke of Savoy had then the title of Royal Highness, and afterward obtained that of Majesty. The grand duke of Florence did as much, and almost arrived at Majesty: and, in fine, the czar, who was known in Europe only by the name of grand duke, declared himself emperor, and has been acknowledged as such.

There were formerly but two marquises in Germany, two in France, and two in Italy. The marquis of Brandenburg has become a king, and a great king; but French and Italian marquises are of a somewhat different nature. Let an Italian citizen have the honor of giving a dinner to the legate of his province, and let the legate in drinking to him say: "My lord marquis, your health," he and his sons are dubbed marquises forever. If a provincial in France, who has no other estate in his village than the fourth part of a small ruinous lordship, arrives at Paris, raises a small fortune, or has the appearance of having raised one, he entitles himself in his deeds, "High and mighty lord, marquis, or count;" and his son will be made by his notary, "Most high and most mighty lord;" and as this ridiculous ambition does no harm either to the government or to civil society, it is allowed to pass unnoticed. Some French lords boast of having German barons in their stables: some German lords say they have French marquises in their kitchens; and it is not long since a foreigner at Naples made his coachman a duke. In matters of this nature, custom is more powerful than the royal authority. If you are but little known at Paris, you may be

a count or a marquis as long as you please; but if you are a man of the long robe, or a collector of the revenues, and if the king give you a real marquisate, you will not on that account be esteemed a marquis. The famous Samuel Barnard was more truly a count than five hundred of those counts whom we daily see, and who do not possess four arpens of land. The king erected his estate of Coubert into a good earldom; and yet, if in a visit he had made himself known as Count Barnard, the company would have burst out laughing. The case is widely different in England. If the king gives a merchant the title of earl or baron, he presently receives from the whole nation the name which belongs to him. People of the first quality, and even the king himself, call him "My Lord." It is the same in Italy. They have there a register of lords. The pope himself gives them this title. His physician is a lord; and nobody finds fault with his dignity.

In France the "Monseigneur" is a terrible affair. A bishop, before the cardinal de Richelieu's time, was only "My most reverend father in God"; but when Richelieu was secretary of state, and still bishop of Luçon, his brethren, the bishops, in order to prevent their being obliged to give him this exclusive title of "Monseigneur," which the secretaries of state began to assume, agreed to give it to themselves. This step met with no opposition from the public. But as it was a new title which the king had not granted to bishops, they were still called in the edicts, declarations, decrees, and in everything that proceeded from the court, only

"Sieurs"; and the gentlemen of the council, in writing to a bishop, only called him "Monsieur." The dukes and peers met with more difficulty in putting themselves in possession of "Monseigneur." The grand nobility, and what is called the grand robe, flatly refused them this distinction. The highest triumph of human pride is to receive titles of honor from those who think themselves our equals; but it is difficult to arrive at this point; because we everywhere find that pride combats pride. When the dukes demanded that the poor gentlemen style them "Monseigneur," the presidents demanded the same from the advocates and procurators. We have known a president refuse to be bled because the surgeon said to him: "Sir, in which arm would you have me bleed you?" There was an old counsellor of the grand chamber who behaved with less ceremony. A pleader said to him: "My lord, the gentleman, your secretary —." The counsellor stopped him short, and said: "You have committed three blunders in three words; I am not a lord; my secretary is not a gentleman; he is my clerk."

In order to terminate this grand dispute of vanity, all the men of the nation must one day become "Monseigneurs," as all the women, who were formerly "Mademoiselle," are now become "Madame." When one Spanish beggar meets another, he says to him: "Seigneur, has your courtesy drunk chocolate?" This polite manner of expression elevates the soul, and preserves the dignity of the species.

Cæsar and Pompey were called Cæsar and Pompey in the senate. But these men did not know

how to live. They concluded their letters with "*vale*"—"farewell."

We were, about sixty years ago, "Affectionate servants": we are now become, "Most humble and most obedient"; and, "We have actually the honor to be" so. I pity our posterity, who will find it difficult to make any addition to these pretty forms. The duke d'Epernon, who exceeded all the Gascons in pride and haughtiness, but not in political abilities, wrote to the cardinal de Richelieu a little before his death, and concluded his letter with, "Your most humble and most obedient"; but recollecting that the cardinal had only given him, "Your most affectionate," he despatched a messenger to bring back the letter, which was already sent off, and having happily recovered it, he wrote "Your most affectionáte," and thus died in the bed of honor.

ON COMMERCE AND LUXURY.

WITHIN the last twenty years commerce has been better understood in France than it had ever before been, from the reign of Pharamond to that of Louis XIV. Before this period it was a secret art, a kind of chemistry in the hands of three or four persons, who actually made gold, but without communicating the secret by which they had been enriched. The body of the nation were in such profound ignorance of this important secret that we had neither minister nor magistrate that knew what the words "annuities," "principal," "exchange," or "dividend" meant. It was destined that a Scotchman called John Law should come into France and overturn the whole economy of our government to instruct us. He had the courage, in the most horrible confusion of our finances, and in the time of a most dreadful famine, to establish a bank and an India company. This was giving a vomit to the sick; we took too much, and convulsions were the consequence: but, at length, from the ruins of his system, we had left us an India company, with a capital amounting to the sum of fifty millions of livres. What had been the case had we taken a moderate dose of that salutary medicine? In my opinion, the state had certainly been the most vigorous and powerful in the whole world.

There prevailed still among us, at the time when the present India company was established, a prejudice so very strong that the Sorbonne declared the

sharing of dividends of actions usurious. In the same manner the German printers, who came to establish their art in France, were, in 1570, accused of witchcraft.

We Frenchmen, there is no denying it, have come very late into everything. Our first steps in the arts have been to thwart the introduction of those truths which came to us from abroad: we defended theses against the circulation of the blood, after it had been demonstrated in England; against the revolution of the earth, which had been made evident in Germany; not even the most salutary remedies have escaped being proscribed by an arret. To discover any new truths, to propose anything of general use to mankind is a sure step to persecution. John Law, that Scotchman to whom we owe our India company, and all we know of commerce, was driven out of France, and died in misery at Venice; and yet, although we had scarcely three hundred merchant ships of any burden when he proposed his system, we have now — in 1738 — over eighteen hundred. Though we owe them all to him, we are yet exceedingly ungrateful to the memory of our benefactor.

The principles of commerce are known at present to all the world: we are beginning to have good books on that subject. The essay *"Sur le Commerce,"* of Melon, is the work of a man of sense, a good citizen, and an excellent philosopher: it has a tincture of the spirit of his age; and I do not think that even in the time of M. Colbert, there were two persons in France capable of producing

such a work. There are, however, a number of errors in that excellent book; so great progress as he has made in the road to truth was no easy matter: it is a service done to the public to point out the mistakes that happen in a useful book. It is indeed in such only we should look for them. It is showing respect to a good work to contradict it; a bad one does not deserve that honor.

The following observations are such as seem contrary to truth:

1. He says those countries in which are the greatest number of beggars are the most barbarous. I believe there is no city more civilized than Paris, and where at the same time there are more beggars. This is a vermin that attach themselves to riches; the drones run from the extremities of the kingdom to Paris, in order to lay opulence and good nature under contribution. This is an abuse difficult to root out, but which proves only that there are wretches in such a country, who prefer begging to getting their livelihood by honest industry. This may be a proof of wealth and negligence, but by no means of barbarity.

2. He repeats in several places that Spain would be more powerful without America. He grounds his observations on the depopulation of Spain, and on the weakness under which that state has long languished. This notion of America weakening Spain is to be met with in a hundred different authors. But had they given themselves the trouble to reflect that the treasures of America were the cement of the power of Charles V., and that by their

means Philip II. would have been master of Europe, if Henry the Great, Elizabeth, and the princes of Orange had not been heroes, those authors would have been of a different way of thinking. It has been imagined that the Spanish monarchy has been in a manner annihilated, because their kings Philip III., Philip IV., and Charles II. were either unfortunate or weak princes. But let us see how this monarchy has resumed new life under Cardinal Alberoni; let us cast our eyes toward Africa and Italy, those theatres of the conquests of the present Spanish government, and we shall be forced to own that nations are just what kings and ministers make them. Courage, fortitude, industry, every talent remains buried till some great genius appears, who rouses and sets them in motion. The capitol is at present inhabited by Recollets, and chaplets are now distributed on the spot where vanquished kings followed the chariot of Paulus Æmilius. Let but an emperor take up his residence in Rome, and let this emperor be a Julius Cæsar, every Roman will become a Cæsar with him.

As to the depopulation of Spain, it is not nearly so great as what it is given out to be: and even after all, this kingdom, and the states of America depending on it, are at this time so many provinces of the same empire, which are separated only by a space that may be sailed over in two months. In a word, their treasures become ours, by a necessary and unavoidable circulation. Their cochineal, their quinine, their mines of Mexico and Peru, are ours, and by the same means our manufactures are Span-

ish. Had America been a burden to them, is it to be thought they would have persisted so long in denying admittance into that country to strangers? Do people preserve with so much care the principle and source of ruin, after having had two hundred years to consider it?

3. He says that the loss of their soldiers is not the most fatal consequence in their wars; that a hundred thousand men are a very small number in comparison to twenty millions; but that an increase of taxes renders twenty millions of persons miserable. I will grant him twenty millions of souls in France; but I will not admit that it is better to have a hundred thousand soldiers cut to pieces than to put the rest of the nation to an additional expense in taxes. This is not all; here is a strange and fatal miscalculation. Louis XIV. had, reckoning the whole body of the marine, four hundred and forty thousand men in pay during the war in 1701. The Roman Empire never had such a numerous army on foot. It has been observed that about one-fifth of an army is destroyed by the end of a campaign by disease, accidents, fire, and sword. Here then are eighty-eight thousand men destroyed each year; therefore, at the expiration of ten years, the state has lost eight hundred and eighty thousand men, together with all the children they would have procreated in that time. At present, if France contains about eighteen millions of souls, take away about one-half for the women, together with all the old men, the children, the clergy, the monks, the magistrates, and those who are necessary

to carry on manufactures and to till the ground, what number remains for the defence of the nation? In eighteen millions you will hardly find eighteen hundred thousand men, and the war in ten years is supposed to have destroyed nearly nine hundred thousand. Thus the war destroys one-half a nation's men capable of bearing arms in her defence; and you say a new impost is more disastrous to a nation than the death of so many of her best people.

After correcting these inadvertencies, which the author would have corrected himself, permit me to consider what he has advanced on freedom of commerce, on manufactures, on exchange, and chiefly with regard to luxury. This wise apology for luxury is by so much the more estimable in this author, and has so much the more force from his mouth, as his life was that of a philosopher.

What then is luxury? It is a word without any precise idea, much such another expression as when we say the eastern and western hemispheres: in fact, there is no such thing as east and west; there is no fixed point where the earth rises and sets; or, if you will, every point on it is at the same time east and west. It is the same with regard to luxury; for either there is no such thing, or else it is in all places alike. Lead us back to those times when our grandfathers wore no shirts. Had anyone told them that they must wear finer and lighter stuffs than the finest cloth, white as snow, and must change them every day; and even after they were a little dirty must, with a composition prepared with great

art, restore them to their former lustre; everybody would cry out, "What luxury! What effeminacy! Such a magnificence as this is hardly sufferable in a king. You want to corrupt our manners and ruin the nation." Do they understand by luxury the expense of an opulent person? Must he then live like the poor, he whose profusion alone is sufficient to maintain the poor? Expensiveness should be the thermometer of a private man's fortune, as general luxury is the infallible mark of a powerful and flourishing empire. It was under Charlemagne, Francis I., and under the ministry of the great Colbert, and the present administration, that men lived at the greatest expense; that is to say, that the arts were encouraged and cultivated.

What would the tart, the satirical la Bruyére be at? What means this affected misanthrope, by crying out: "Our ancestors knew not what it was to prefer taste to utility; they were never known to light themselves with waxen tapers; this was a commodity reserved for the altar and the royal palace. They were never heard to say: 'Let my horses be put to my coach'; good pewter shone on their tables and side-boards; their silver was laid up in their coffers," etc. Is not this a very pleasant eulogium of our forefathers, to say they had neither taste, industry, neatness, nor plenty? Their silver was laid up in their coffers. Were this really true, it was certainly the greatest folly imaginable. Money is made for circulation, to bring the secrets of art to light, and to purchase the industry and labors of men: he who hoards it is a bad citizen, and even

a bad economist. It is by circulating it that we render ourselves useful to our country and to ourselves. Will men never grow weary of commending the follies of antiquity, with a view to ridicule the advantages of our own times?

This work of Melon has produced another by M. Dutot, which is preferable, both in point of depth and justness of reasoning. This work of M. Dutot is likely to give birth to another, which will probably carry the palm from both the others, as it is the production of a statesman. Never was the study of the belles-lettres so closely connected with that of the revenues, which is an additional merit in the age in which we live.

MONEY AND THE REVENUES OF KINGS.

It is well known that every change in the money in the last reign was both burdensome to the people and hurtful to the interest of the king. In these, therefore, is there no case in which an augmentation of the money may become necessary?

In a state, for instance, that has but a small share of commerce, and as small a share of money—which has long been the case with France—if a lord shall possess an estate of a hundred marks a year, he is forced to borrow, in order to marry his daughters, or to carry on a war, a thousand marks, for which he is to pay fifty marks per annum. By this means his family is reduced to the annual expense of fifty marks for all charges. In the meantime the nation becomes more industrious, carries on a trade, so that money becomes more plenty. Then, as it never fails to happen, labor becomes dearer, so that the expense of luxuries, agreeable to the rank of this family, becomes double, treble, and even quadruple; while the corn, which is the sole resource of the country, does not increase in the same proportion, because people eat no greater quantity of bread than heretofore, though a great deal more is consumed in magnificence. What was formerly bought with fifty marks, now costs two hundred; so that the owner of land, who is now obliged to pay fifty marks of annuity, is obliged to dispose of his estate. What I now say of the lord, I say equally of the magistrate, the man of letters, and of the laborer: he buys

his pewter dishes, his silver cup, his bed, and his linen so much the dearer. In a word, the highest personage in the land is similarly situated when his revenues are no more than certain fixed demesnes, together with certain imposts, which he is afraid to increase, for fear of exciting murmurs among his people. In this pressing situation, there is certainly but one expedient left to ease the debtor. This may be done by abolishing his debts; this is the custom practised by the Egyptians and several other oriental nations, at the expiration of every fifty, and sometimes every thirty years. This custom was far from being so rigid as is imagined, the creditors having taken their measures accordingly, and a loss which was discernible so long beforehand can hardly be called a loss. Although this law is not in force with us, it was, however, found necessary to have recourse to it in effect, whatever roundabout methods were used to avoid it. For what is it, when one falls on a method to pay only the fourth part of what he owes, but a kind of jubilee? This was very easily discovered, by giving coins an arbitrary value, and saying, this piece of gold, which was in value six livres, shall from this day forward be valued at twenty-four; and whoever should owe four such pieces of gold, under the title of six livres each, would pay his debt by paying only one single piece of gold, which would be called twenty-four livres. As these operations were performed by insensible degrees, nobody was startled at the change. One who was both debtor and creditor gained on one hand what he lost on the other. Another carried

on trade; and a third was a sufferer, and was obliged to retrench.

In this manner all the nations of Europe have proceeded, before they had a regular and an extensive commerce. Let us examine the conduct of the Romans; we shall find that the *As,* the pound of copper of twelve ounces, was reduced to six liards of our present money. Among the English, the pound sterling of sixteen ounces of silver is reduced to twenty-two livres of our money. The pound gross among the Dutch is worth about twelve livres. But our livre is what has undergone the greatest change of them all.

In the time of Charlemagne we called the current coin equal in value to the twentieth part of a livre, a *"solide,"* from the Roman name of *"solidum";* this *"solide"* is what we now call a "sou," in the same manner as we barbarously designate the eighth month *août,* which we very politely pronounce *Ou;* so that in our exceedingly polite language, *hodieque manent vestigia ruris.* In short, this *"solide,"* or "sou," which was the twentieth part of a livre, and the tenth part of a mark of silver, is at this day no more than a penny piece of copper money, representing the nineteen hundred and twentieth part of a livre, silver being quoted at forty-nine livres the mark. This calculation is almost incredible; and it is found by this very calculation that a family that formerly should have had a hundred *"solides"* yearly rent, and who could have lived extremely well, would now have no more than five-sixths of a crown of six livres to spend yearly.

What does all this prove? Why this; that of all nations we have always been the most given to change, though by no means the happiest; that we have pushed the abuse of a law of nature, which requires the easing of debtors oppressed by the diminution of the value of money, to an enormous and most intolerable excess. Now, since M. Dutot has so well exposed the dangers of those sudden shocks which the change of the summary value of the coin occasions, it is to be hoped that, in an age so enlightened as ours, we run no risk of undergoing like disasters.

What most surprised me in M. Dutot's work, was to find him asserting that Louis XII., Francis I., Henry II., and Henry III. were richer than Louis XV. Who could have thought that Henry III., at the present rate of computation, at least had one hundred and sixty-three millions more revenue than our present king? I confess I have not yet been able to surmount my surprise. For how should Henry III., if he was actually possessed of such immense wealth, have found so much difficulty in opposing the Spaniards? How came he to be so oppressed by the Guises? How came France to lose her arts and manufactures? Why is it that no fine houses were built, no royal palace erected, no taste, nor the least symptoms of magnificence were then to be seen — those never-failing attendants of riches? At present three hundred fortresses, always in thorough repair, which strengthen and adorn our frontiers, and which are garrisoned with at least two hundred thousand men, are a certain proof of

the superiority of our wealth. The troops which compose the king's household may well be compared to the ten thousand, covered with gold and silver, which attended on the chariot of Xerxes and Darius. Paris contains twice the number of people, and is a hundred times more opulent than under Henry III. Commerce, which, if we had any, was in a most languishing and prostrate condition, now flourishes, to the vast emolument of the nation.

Since the last melting down of the coin, it has been found that upward of twelve hundred millions in gold and silver passed through the mint. It is found, by the sum of the stamp-duty on those metals, that there is in France about an equal quantity of bullion in wrought plate. It is true, those immense riches cannot be said to lessen the misery of the people in a year of dearth. But this is not the subject of our present inquiry: the question is, to know by what means, though the nation has become incomparably richer than in the preceding ages, the king has yet become actually poorer.

Let us first of all compare the riches of Louis XV. with those of Francis I. The public revenues then amounted to sixteen millions of nominal livres, which livre was to the present as one is to four and a half. Therefore sixteen millions of such livres were equal in value to seventy-two millions of our livres; whence it follows that with seventy-two millions only we should be as rich as at that period. But the revenues of the state are supposed to amount to two hundred millions: therefore Louis XV. is richer by one hundred and twenty-eight millions

than Francis I.; therefore, too, this prince is three times richer than Francis I., and in consequence draws from his people three times the money that Francis I. was able to do. This is very different from the calculation of M. Dutot.

He pretends, in order to prove his system, that commodities are fifteen times dearer than in the sixteenth century. Let us examine the price of commodities: we shall confine ourselves to the price of corn at the capital, one year with another. I find many years in the sixteenth century in which corn was fifty, twenty-five, twenty, and at eighteen sous, and even at four livres, from which I estimate the mean value at thirty sous. Wheat is now worth twelve livres: therefore commodities have increased in the proportion of eight times their former value, which is the same proportion as the increase of their value in England and Germany. But those thirty sous, of the sixteenth century, were worth five livres, fifteen sous of our present money. Now five livres fifteen sous make, excepting only five sous, one-half of twelve livres: wherefore Louis XV. actually is three times richer than Francis I., as he pays no more than twice the sum for commodities than was paid then. Now a person who has nine hundred livres, and buys a commodity for six hundred livres, will certainly remain richer by a hundred crowns than he who, being possessed of three hundred livres, buys the same commodity for three hundred livres: therefore Louis XV. remains richer by one-third.

But this is not all: instead of buying everything at double the price, he purchases soldiers, the most

necessary commodity of kings, at a much cheaper rate than any of his predecessors. Under Francis I. and Henry II. the strength of our armies consisted in a national gendarmerie, and in foreign infantry that cannot be compared in any respect to our present troops. But the infantry under Louis XV. is paid nearly on the same footing, that is, at the same price of numerary livres, as under Henry IV. The soldier sells his life and liberty at the rate of six sous a day, including his clothing: these six sous are equal to twelve in the time of Henry IV., so that with the same revenue as Henry the Great, we are able to maintain double the number of troops; and with double that sum, we can maintain four times that number. What I have said in this place suffices to show that, notwithstanding all the calculations of M. Dutot, our kings, as well as the state, are richer than formerly. I will not, however, deny that both are much deeper in debt.

Louis XIV. left at his death upward of twice ten hundred millions of debt, at thirty livres the mark, because he would have, at the same time, five hundred thousand men in arms, two hundred ships of war, and build Versailles; and because, in the War of the Spanish Succession, his arms were long unprosperous; but the resources of France by much exceed her debts. A state which is indebted only to itself can never be impoverished, and even debts are a spur to industry.

THOUGHTS ON THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION.

I.

PUFFENDORF, and those who write like him on the interests of princes, make almanacs, which are defective even for the current year, and which next year are absolutely good for nothing.

II.

Who would have said at the Peace of Nimeguen, that Spain, Mexico, Peru, Naples, Sicily, and Parma would one day belong to the house of France?

III.

Could anyone foresee at the time that Charles XII. governed Sweden with despotic sway that his successors would have no more authority than the kings of Poland?

IV.

The kings of Denmark were doges about a century ago; at present they are absolute.

V.

The Russians in former times sold themselves like the negroes; at present they have such a high opinion of their own merit that they will not admit foreign soldiers into their army, and they reckon it a point of honor never to desert; but they must still employ foreign officers, because the nation has not

yet acquired so much skill as courage, having only learned to obey.

VI.

Animals accustomed to the yoke offer themselves to it of their own accord. Some obscure compiler of the letters of Queen Christina has offered an insult to the common sense of mankind by justifying the murder of Monaldeschi, who was assassinated at Fontainebleau by order of a Swedish lady, under the excuse that this lady had once been queen. None but the assassins employed by her could have had the impudence to allege that that princess might lawfully do at Fontainebleau what would have been a crime at Stockholm.

VII.

That government would be worthy of the Hottentots in which a certain number of men should be allowed to say: "Those who labor ought to pay; we ought to pay nothing, because we are idle."

VIII.

That government would be an insult both to God and man in which the citizens might say: "The state has given us all we possess; and we owe it nothing but prayers."

IX.

The more reason is improved, the more does it destroy the seeds of religious wars. It is the spirit of philosophy that has banished this plague from the earth.

X.

Were Luther and Calvin to return to the world, they would make no more noise than the Scotists and the Thomists. The reason is, they would appear in an age when men begin to be enlightened.

XI.

It is only in times of barbarity that we see sorcerers, and people possessed by evil spirits, kings excommunicated, and subjects absolved from their oath of allegiance by doctors.

XII.

There is a convent in the world, entirely useless in every respect, which enjoys an income of two hundred thousand livres. Reason shows that if these two hundred thousand livres were given to a hundred officers who should marry, there would be a hundred useful citizens rewarded, a hundred young women provided for, and at least four hundred persons more in the state at the end of ten years, instead of fifty sluggards. It further shows that if these fifty sluggards were restored to their country they would cultivate the earth and people it; and that of course there would be more laborers and soldiers. This is what is wished for by everyone, from the prince of the blood to the vine-dresser. Superstition alone opposed it formerly; but reason, acting in subordination to faith, ought to crush superstition.

XIII.

A prince, by a single word, can at least prevent young people from making vows before the age of twenty-five; and should anyone say to the sovereign: "What will become of young ladies of rank, whom we commonly sacrifice to the eldest sons of our families?" the prince may reply: "They will become what they are in Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, England, and Holland; they will produce citizens; they were born for propagation, and not to repeat Latin, which they do not understand. A woman that nourishes two children and spins is more useful to the state than all the convents in the world."

XIV.

It is a great happiness both to the prince and the state that there are a number of philosophers who impress these maxims on the minds of the people.

XV.

Philosophers, having no particular interest, can only speak in favor of reason and of the public good.

XVI.

Philosophers love religion; and are useful to kings by destroying superstition, which is always an enemy to princes.

XVII.

It was superstition that occasioned the assassination of Henry III., of Henry IV., of William, prince of Orange, and of so many others. To it we ought

to ascribe the rivers of blood that have been shed since the time of Constantine.

XVIII.

Superstition is the most dreadful enemy of the human race. When it rules the prince, it hinders him from consulting the good of his people; when it rules the people, it makes them rebel against their prince.

XIX.

There is not a single example in history of philosophers opposing themselves to the laws of the prince. There never was an age in which superstition and enthusiasm did not occasion commotions that fill us with horror.

XX.

Liberty consists in depending upon the laws only. In this view every man is free in Sweden, England, Holland, Switzerland, Geneva, and Hamburg. The case is the same in Venice and Genoa; though in these two places whoever does not belong to the body of the nobles is despised and contemned. But there are still many provinces, and large Christian kingdoms where the greater part of the people are slaves.

XXI.

A time will come in these countries when some prince, more accomplished than his predecessors, will make the laborers of the land sensible that it is not wholly for their interest that a man who has

one horse, or several horses, that is, a nobleman, should have a right to kill a peasant, by laying ten crowns on his grave. Ten crowns, it is true, is a very considerable sum to a man born in a certain climate; but in process of time people will have the sagacity to discover that it is of little use to a dead man. The commons then may possibly be admitted to a share in the administration; and the form of government which prevails in England and Sweden may, perhaps, be established in the neighborhood of Turkey.

XXII.

A citizen of Amsterdam is a man; a citizen a few degrees of longitude from there is a beast of burden.

XXIII.

All men are born equal; but a native of Morocco never dreams of such a truth.

XXIV.

This equality does not destroy subordination. As men, we are all equal; as members of society we are not. All natural rights belong equally to the sultan and to a Bostangi. Both of them may dispose with the same freedom of their persons, their families, and their effects. Thus in things essential all men are equal, though they play different parts on the theatre of the world.

XXV.

People are always asking what is the best form of government. Put this question to a minister or to

his deputy; they will doubtless be for absolute power. Put it to a baron; he would have the baronies have a share in the legislative power. The bishops will say the same. The citizen would have you consult reason, and the peasant would not wish to be forgotten. The best government seems to be that in which all ranks of men are equally protected by the laws.

XXVI.

A republican is always more strongly attached to his own country than a subject is to his; and for this good reason, too, that men have a greater regard for their own property than for that of their master.

XXVII.

What is love of our country? A compound of self-love and prejudice, which the good of society has exalted into the chief of the virtues. It is of great consequence that this vague term, "the public," should make a deep impression.

XXVIII.

When the lord of a castle or the inhabitant of a city blames the exercise of absolute power, and complains of the oppression of the peasants, believe them not. Few people complain of evils which they do not feel. Besides, the citizens and gentlemen seldom hate the person of their sovereign, except in a civil war. What they hate is absolute power in the fourth or fifth hand: it is the antechamber of a deputy or of a secretary of an intendant that occa-

sions their murmurs: it is because they have received a rebuff from an insolent valet in the palace that they groan in their desolate fields.

XXIX.

The English reproach the French with serving their masters cheerfully. The following verses are the best that have ever been written in England on that subject:

A nation here I pity and admire;
Whom noblest sentiments of glory fire,
Yet taught by custom's force, and bigot fear,
To serve with pride, and boast the yoke they bear:
Whose nobles born to cringe, and to command,
In courts a mean, in camps a generous band,
From priests and stock-jobbers content receive
Those laws their dreaded arms to Europe give:
Whose people vain in want, in bondage blessed,
Though plundered gay, industrious though oppressed,
With happy follies rise above their fate;
The jest and envy of a wiser state.

In answer to all these declamations with which English poetry, pamphlets, and sermons are filled we may observe that it is very natural to love a house which has reigned for nearly eight hundred years. Several foreigners, and among these some Englishmen, have come to settle in France, merely for the sake of living happily.

XXX.

A king who is never contradicted can hardly be bad.

XXXI.

Some English peasants who have never travelled farther than London imagine that the king of France, when he has nothing else to do, sends for a president, and by way of amusement gives his estate to a valet of the wardrobe.

XXXII.

There are few countries in the world where the fortunes of individuals are more secure than in France. When Count Maurice de Nassau was setting out from The Hague, in order to take upon him the command of the Dutch infantry, he asked me if the French would confiscate the rents which he had a right to receive from the Town-House of Paris. "They will pay you," said I, "exactly on the same day with Count Maurice de Saxe, who commands the French army;" and my prediction was literally fulfilled.

XXXIII.

Louis XI. in the course of his reign sent about four thousand of his subjects to the gallows, because he was not absolute, and wanted to be so. Louis XIV., after the affair of the duke de Lauzun, did not banish a single courtier, because he was absolute. In the reign of Charles II. more than fifty persons of consequence lost their heads at London.

XXXIV.

In the reign of Louis XIII. there was not a single year passed without some faction or other. Louis

the Just began by causing his prime minister to be assassinated. He suffered the cardinal de Richelieu, who was more cruel than himself, to bathe the scaffolds with blood.

Cardinal Mazarin, though placed in the same circumstances, did not put a single person to death. A foreigner as he was, he could not have supported himself by acts of cruelty. If Richelieu had had no factions to contend with, he would have raised the kingdom to the highest pitch of grandeur, because his cruelty, which proceeded from the haughtiness of his temper, having no object to employ it, would have suffered the natural greatness of his soul to operate in its full extent.

XXXV.

In a book full of profound reflections and ingenious flights of fancy, despotism is reckoned among the natural forms of government. The author, who was a great wit, surely meant to rally.

There is no government naturally despotic. There is no country in the world where the people say to one man: "Sir, we give your sacred majesty the power of taking our wives, our children, our goods, and our lives, and of causing us to be empaled according to your good pleasure and your adorable caprice."

The Grand Turk swears on the Koran to observe the laws. He cannot put anyone to death without a decree of the divan, and a fetfa of the mufti. He is so little despotic that he can neither change the value of money, nor break the janissaries. It is not

true that he is master of the effects of his subjects. He bestows lands, which are called "timariots," in the same manner as fiefs were formerly bestowed.

XXXVI.

Despotism is the abuse of monarchy, as anarchy is the abuse of a republican form of government. A sultan, who, without the forms, and in violation of the laws of justice, imprisons or murders his subjects, is a public robber, dignified with the title of Your Highness.

XXXVII.

A modern author says there is more virtue in republics, and more honor in monarchies.

Honor is the desire of being honored. To be a man of honor is to do nothing unworthy of honor. We cannot say of a recluse that he is a man of honor. That expression is applied to signify that degree of esteem which every member of society would have paid to his own person. We must settle the meaning of terms, without which we shall soon be involved in such confusion that we shall no longer be able to understand one another.

In the time of the Roman Republic, this desire of being honored with statues, crowns of laurel, and triumphs rendered the Romans conquerors of the greater part of the world. The spirit of honor was kept alive by the empty form of a ceremony, by a leaf of laurel or parsley.

But when the republic was abolished, this kind of honor was likewise extinguished.

XXXVIII.

A republic is not founded on virtue: it is founded on the ambition of every citizen, which checks the ambition of others; on pride restraining pride; and on the desire of ruling, which will not suffer another to rule. Hence are formed laws which preserve as great an equality as possible. It is a society where the guests eat at the same table with an equal appetite, until a strong and voracious man comes, who takes all to himself, and leaves them only the crumbs.

XXXIX.

Little machines do not succeed in the main, because their operations are interrupted by the friction of the wheels. The case is the same with states. China cannot be governed like the republic of Lucca.

XL.

Calvinism and Lutheranism are in danger in Germany; that country is full of great bishoprics, sovereign abbacies, and canonries, all proper for making conversions. A Protestant prince turns Catholic in order to become a bishop, or king of a certain country, as a princess does in order to get a husband.

XLI.

If ever the Romish religion regains its former ascendency, it will be by the allurement of rich benefices, and by means of the monks. The monks

are troops that are perpetually fighting; the Protestants have no troops.

XLII.

It is pretended that religions are made for climates. But Christianity has long existed in Asia. It began in Palestine, and it has penetrated as far as Norway. The Englishman, who said that religions had their birth in Asia, their grave in England, reasoned much better.

XLIII.

It must be owned there are some ceremonies and mysteries which cannot take place but in certain climates. People bathe in the Ganges at the new moons; but were they obliged to bathe in the Vistula in the month of January, this act of religion would not be long in force.

XLIV.

It is alleged that Mahomet's law prohibiting the use of wine is a law of the climate of Arabia, because, in that country, wine would coagulate the blood, and water is refreshing. It would have been just as reasonable to make an eleventh commandment in Spain and Italy, enjoining the inhabitants to ply the bottle.

Mahomet did not forbid wine, because the Arabians loved water. It is said in the *"Sonna,"* that he forbade it, because he had been a witness of the shocking excesses which drunkenness occasioned.

XLV.

All religious laws are not the effect of the nature of the climate. To eat, standing, a boiled lamb with lettuce, and to throw the remainder of it into the fire; not to eat a rabbit, because it has not a cloven foot, and because it chews the cud; to sprinkle one's left ear with the blood of an animal: all these ceremonies have little connection with the nature of the climate.

XLVI.

If Leo X. had permitted indulgences to be sold by the Augustine monks, who were wont to sell such merchandise, he would have had no Protestants. If Anne Boleyn had not been beautiful, England had still professed the Romish religion. To what was it owing that the Spaniards were not all Arians, and afterward Mahometans? To what was it owing that Carthage did not destroy Rome?

XLVII.

From one given event to deduce all the events in the world is a fine problem; but it belongs only to the Sovereign of the universe to solve it.

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN THE INTENDANT DES MENUS AND THE ABBE BRIZEL.

NOT long ago, a counsellor of the order of advocates being consulted by a person of the comedian order, who desired to know what degree of censure they incur who have a fine voice, noble gesture, feeling, taste, and all the talents requisite for speaking in public, the counsellor examined the affair[1] according to the order of law. The order of the Convulsionaries having laid this work before the order of the grand chamber which sits at Paris, this latter issued an order to the hangman to burn the consultation, as if it had been a bishop's mandate, or a book composed by a Jesuit. I flatter myself that it will do the same honor to the conversation of the indendant des menus and the abbé Brizel. I was present at that conversation; I have collected it with the utmost exactness, and I here present the public with an abstract of it, which every reader that has common sense may extend as he thinks proper.

"I put the case," said the intendant des menus to the abbé Brizel, "that we had never heard of plays before the age of Louis XIV. I put the case that that prince had been the first that caused dramatic pieces to be exhibited; that he had caused *'Cinna.' 'Athalie,' and 'Le Misanthrope,'* to be

[1] The work of this counsellor, which turned very much upon order, was complained of by M. Le Dain, and burned at the bottom of the stairs.

composed and represented by noblemen and ladies, before all the ambassadors of Europe; I ask, if it would ever have entered into the head of the curate La Chétardie, or the curate Fantin, both known in the world by the same adventures, or into that of any other curate or monk, to excommunicate these noblemen, these ladies, and Louis XIV. himself, to refuse them the sacraments of marriage and burial?" "No, doubtless," answered the abbé Brizel, "such an absurdity could never have entered into the head of any man living." "I will go still farther," said the intendant des menus; "when Louis XIV. and his whole court danced upon the stage, when Louis XIV. danced with so many young noblemen of his own age, do you think they would have been excommunicated?" "You jest," said the abbé Brizel, "we are great fools, I own, but not enough so to imagine such an absurdity."

"But," said the intendant, "you have excommunicated the pious abbé d'Aubignac, Father Bossu, the superior of St. Genevieve, Father Rapin, the abbé Gravina, Father Brumoy, Father Porce, Madame Dacier, and all who have taught the arts of tragedy and epic poetry according to the laws of Aristotle." "We are not yet fallen into such an excess of barbarism," answered Brizel; "it is true, the abbé de la Coste, M. de la Solle, and the author of 'The Ecclesiastical Gazette,' maintain that theatrical declamation, music, and dancing are mortal sins; that David was permitted to dance nowhere but before the ark, and that neither David, Louis XIV., nor Louis XV. ever danced for money; that

the empress of Germany never sang but in the presence of a few grandees of her court; and that there is no pleasure in excommunicating any but those who are gainers by speaking, singing, and dancing in public."

"It is then evident," said the intendant, "that if there was a tax called that of the king's recreations, and if the expenses of them were to be paid by that tax, the king would incur the penalty of excommunication, at the pleasure of any priest who should think proper to launch his thunder at the head of his most Christian majesty."

"You puzzle me, excessively," said Brizel.

"I will push the matter home," said Menus; "not only Louis XIV., but Cardinal Mazarin, Cardinal de Richelieu, Archbishop Trissino, and Pope Leo X. were at considerable expense in causing tragedies, comedies, and operas to be represented. The people contributed toward these expenses; yet I cannot find in the history of the Church, that any vicar of St. Sulpice has for this excommunicated Pope Leo X. and these cardinals.

"Why then was Mademoiselle Lecouvreur carried in a hackney coach to the corner of Burgundy Street? Why was Romagnesi, a player belonging to our Italian company, buried upon the high road, like an ancient Roman? Why was an actress belonging to the dissonant choruses of the Royal Academy of Music kept three days in her own cellar? Why are all these persons to be burned by a slow fire till the great day of judgment, without having bodies; and why are they, after that day, to be burned to all

eternity when they have found their bodies again? It is for no other reason, you will say, but because a pit ticket costs twenty sous.

"Yet those twenty sous do not change the nature of things: they are neither better nor worse in themselves whether the twenty sous are paid or not. A *'de profundis'* has equal power to deliver a soul out of purgatory, whether it be skilfully sung for ten crowns, harshly chanted for twelve livres, or sung as the Psalms are, gratis. It follows then, that there is nothing more diabolical in *'Cinna'* or *'Athalie'* when they are represented for twenty sous, than when the king causes them to be played for the amusement of his court. Now if Louis XIV. was not excommunicated when he danced for his diversion, nor the empress when she played in an opera, it does not appear to be just that those should be excommunicated who give us these entertainments for money by the permission of the king of France, or the empress."

The abbé Brizel felt the force of this argument; he made this answer: "There are ways of compromising matters; it is wisely ordered that all should depend upon the arbitrary will of a curate or a vicar. We are so happy and so wise as to have no fixed rule in France. Nobody would venture to bury the illustrious and inimitable Molière in the parish of St. Eustache; but he had the happiness to be carried to St. Joseph's chapel, according to our excellent and healthy custom of making charnel-houses of our churches. It is true, St. Eustache is so great a saint that it would have been improper

to have caused the body of the infamous author of *'Le Misanthrope'* to be carried thither: but St. Joseph afforded some consolation; it was consecrated ground even there. There is an immense difference between consecrated ground and profane; the first is, without comparison, the most light; and then the value of the ground is increased in proportion to that of the man. That in which Molière was interred has acquired reputation. Now as this man was buried in a chapel, he cannot be damned, like Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and Romagnesi, who were buried upon the highway. Perhaps he is punished in purgatory for having written "Tartuffe"; I would not venture to swear to the contrary; but I have no doubt of the salvation of Jean Baptiste Lulli, fiddler to the king's sister, king's musician, superintendent of the king's music, who played in *"Cariselli"* and *"Pourceaugnac,"* and was, moreover, a Florentine; he is gone to heaven as surely as I shall go thither myself; that is evident, for he has a fine marble monument at St. Eustache's church: he was not thrown upon a dung-hill: fortune rules the globe." Thus reasoned the abbé Brizel, and his reasoning must be allowed to be strong

The intendant des menus, who is well versed in history, replied as follows: "You have, doubtless, heard of the reverend Father Girard; he was a sorcerer; nothing can be more certain. It is well attested that he bewitched his penitent by flogging her. Nay, more, he breathed upon her as all sorcerers do. Sixteen judges declared Girard to be

a magician; yet he was buried in consecrated ground. Tell me, now, why should a man that was both a Jesuit and a sorcerer have all the honors of sepulture notwithstanding? and why should Mademoiselle Clairon be deprived of them, if she should happen to die immediately after playing Paulina, who makes her exit in order to be baptized."

"I have already told you," answered the abbé Brizel, "that that is arbitrary. I should be very ready to bury Mademoiselle Clairon if there was anything considerable to be got by it; but some curates might possibly make a scruple to do so; in such a case, no one would think of making a disturbance in her favor, and of making a sort of appeal to parliament as though on account of an abuse. His majesty's comedians are, generally speaking, citizens descended of poor families: their relations have neither money nor credit sufficient to succeed in a lawsuit; the public does not concern itself about them; it enjoyed the talents of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, during her life; suffered her to be treated like a dog after her death, and looked upon all this as a mere jest.

"The example of sorcerers is a great deal more serious. It was formerly certain that there were sorcerers; it is now certain that there are none, in spite of sixteen judges of Provence, who thought Girard so extraordinary a personage. Excommunication still subsists notwithstanding. If you have no sorcerers, it is so much the worse for you; we shall not change our rituals because the world has changed; we resemble Pourceaugnac's physician,

we must have a patient, and we take the first that offers.

"Excommunication extends even to grasshoppers; grasshoppers they are; it is a sad case, I own, that the Church should continue to stigmatize them, for they make a jest of excommunication. I have seen clouds of them in Picardy; it is very dangerous to offend great companies, and to expose the thunders of the Church to the contempt of persons in power; but as to three or four hundred poor comedians scattered up and down through the kingdom of France, there is nothing to fear from treating them like grasshoppers, and those who play tricks of legerdemain.

"I shall now tell you something still more to the purpose: M. Intendant, are you not the son of a farmer-general?" "No, sir," said the intendant, "that was my uncle's place; my father was receiver-general of the finances, and both were secretaries to his majesty, as well as my grandfather." "Well then," replied Brizel, "your uncle, your father, and your grandfather, are excommunicated, anathematized, damned to all eternity; and whoever has the least doubt of this, is an impious wretch, a monster, in a word, a philosopher."

M. Intendant, hearing this, did not know whether he should laugh at the abbé or beat him; he however chose rather to laugh. "I wish, sir," said he to Brizel, "you would be so good as to show me the bull or decree of council that damns the receivers of the king's finances, and those who are concerned in the king's five great farms." "I will produce

twenty councils," said Brizel; "I will do more, I will show you a passage in the Gospel which declares that every receiver of king's money is placed in the class of Pagans; and you will find by the ancient constitutions that they were not suffered to enter the Church in its early centuries. *'Sicut Ethnicus et Publicanus'*—'as a Gentile and a publican,' is a passage well known; the ecclesiastical law has admitted of no change upon this head; the anathema thrown out against tax-gatherers, against receivers of the public money, was never revoked. Would you then have that revoked which was launched, in the earliest centuries, against actors who played the *'Œdipus'* of Sophocles; an anathema which is still in force against those who no longer play the *'Œdipus'* of Corneille. Begin with bringing your father, your grandfather, and your uncle out of hell; and then we will do what we can for his majesty's comedians."

"You talk madly, M. Brizel," said the intendant; "my father was the chief person in his parish, he is buried in his own chapel; my uncle erected to his memory a marble mausoleum, as fine as Lulli's; and if his curate had ever talked to him of *Ethnicus et Publicanus,* he would have had him thrown into a ditch. I do not doubt but St. Matthew might have damned tax-gatherers, though he had been one himself, or that they stood at the church doors in ancient days; but you must own that, in the present times, nobody would venture to tell us so to our faces; and that if we are excommunicated, it is only *incognito.*"

"You have hit it," said Brizel: "we leave the

Ethnicus et Publicanus in the Gospel; we no longer open the ancient rituals, and we live in peace with the farmers-general, provided they pay well for receiving the sacrament."

M. Intendant was somewhat appeased, but he could not digest the *Ethnicus et Publicanus*. "I entreat you, my dear Brizel," said he, "to tell me why that satirical stroke was inserted in your books, and why we were so ill-treated in the early ages." "That is no difficult matter," said Brizel: "those who pronounced this excommunication were poor people, and most of them Jews; about a quarter of the number consisted of Greeks; the Romans were their masters; the receivers of tribute were either Romans, or elected by the Romans; there could not be a more infallible method of drawing in the populace than by anathematizing the officers of the revenue: conquerors, masters, and tax-gatherers are always hated. The populace run after folks who preach up equality of conditions, and damn the farmers of the revenue: exclaim in the name of the Most High against powers and taxes, the mob will certainly declare for you, if you are not stopped in your career; and when a sufficient number of those of the lower class is devoted to you, then men of abilities will not be wanting to put saddles upon their backs, bits in their mouths, and to ride them till they have subverted states and thrones: then they will erect a new building, but they will preserve the old stones, though rude and unformed, because they were of service before, and are dear to the people; they will be added to the

new marble, the gold and the precious stones will be afterward lavished; and there will be always bearded antiquaries who will prefer the old rubbish to the new marble.

"This, sir, is the succinct history of what has passed among us. France was a long time immersed in barbarism; and even now that it begins to be civilized, there are still among us persons attached to the ancient barbarism. We have, for example, a small number of virtuous people, who would willingly deprive the farmers-general of all their wealth condemned by the Gospel, and deprive the world of an art as noble as innocent, which the Gospel never forbade, and which none of the apostles have spoken of. But the sensible part of the clergy leaves the financiers to jog on to the devil in peace, and only suffers the comedians to be damned for mere matter of form." "I understand," said the intendant des menus; "you take care not to offend the financiers, because they invite you to dinner; you fall upon the comedians because they never invite you. Do you forget, sir, that the comedians receive the king's pay, and that you cannot excommunicate an officer of the king for doing his duty? You are not therefore to excommunicate a comedian of the king's, who plays *'Cinna'* or *'Polyeucte'* by his special command."

"And where did you learn," said Brizel, "that we have not power to damn one of the king's officers? I suppose from the rights of your Gallican Church. But are you ignorant that we excommunicate even kings themselves? We proscribed

the great Henry IV., Henry III., and Louis XII., the father of his people, while he called a council at Pisa; Philip the Fair, Philip Augustus, Louis VIII., Philip I. and the pious King Robert, though he had burned so many heretics; know that we have it in our power to anathematize all princes, and to cause them to die suddenly; consider that, and then complain, if you will, that we fall upon a few theatrical princes."

The intendant des menus, somewhat nettled, interrupted him, and said: "You may excommunicate my masters as you please, but they will know how to punish you; but reflect that it is I that go to his majesty's comedians with his orders to come and damn themselves before him: if they are out of the pale of the Church, I am out of it also; if they are guilty of a mortal sin, in drawing tears from virtuous men by acting in virtuous pieces, it is I who give occasion to that sin; if they go to the devil, it is I that conduct them to hell. I receive the order from the first gentlemen of the chamber, they are more guilty than I; the king and queen, who command them to act for their instruction and delight, are yet a hundred times more guilty. If you cut off soldiers from the body of the Church, you must inevitably at the same time cut off the officers and the generals; you will never extricate yourself out of this difficulty. Do but reflect in what an absurdity you involve yourself; you suffer citizens in his majesty's service to be thrown to the dogs, while at Rome, and in all other countries,

they are treated honorably during their lives and after their deaths."

Brizel answered, "Do you not see that it is because we are a grave, serious, consistent people, in every respect superior to the inhabitants of other countries? One-half of Paris has embraced the sect of Convulsionaries; people of this stamp should check those libertines who are satisfied with obeying the king, who do not control his actions, who love his person, who cheerfully supply him wherewithal to support the dignity of his throne, who, after having discharged their duty, pass their lives with tranquility in cultivating the arts; who respect Sophocles and Euripides, and who damn themselves by living like people of virtue and sense.

"This world, I must acknowledge, is composed of knaves, fanatics, and idiots, among whom there is a little separate society called Good Company; this little society being rich, well bred, knowing, and polite, is, as it were, the flower of human kind; for this society elegant pleasures are intended; the greatest men have exerted their talents for their pleasure; it is they that give reputation, and, to tell you all, it is this society that despises us, while it behaves politely to us whenever we fall in its way. We all endeavor to gain admittance to this small number of select persons, and, from the Jesuits to the Capuchins, from Father Quesnel to the scoundrel who composes the 'Ecclesiastical Gazette,' we assume a thousand forms, in order to acquire some credit with this small number, of which it is impossible for us ever to be. If we find any lady weak

enough to listen to us, we persuade her that it is absolutely necessary to have white cheeks in order to go to heaven, and that red is highly displeasing to the saints in Paradise. The lady leaves off painting, and we squeeze money out of her.

"We love to preach because chairs are hired at church; but how can it be expected that people of taste should listen to a tedious discourse, divided into three articles, while they have their minds full of the beautiful passages of *'Cinna,' 'Polyeucte,'* the *'Les Horaces,' 'Pompée,' 'Phèdre,'* and *'Athalie!'* This exasperates us.

"We enter the house of a lady of quality; we ask the company's opinion of the last sermon of the preacher at St. Roc; the lady's son answers us by repeating some lines of Racine. We then ask them whether they have read the theological tract entitled, 'The Work of Six Days?' We are told in return, that a new tragedy has just appeared. In fine, the time is approaching when we shall have no longer any influence except over the rabble. This piques us; and when we are in an ill humor, we excommunicate as many as we are able.

"The case is not the same at Rome, and in the other states of Europe. When a fine mass has been sung at St. John of Lateran, or St. Peter's church, with grand choruses in four parts, and when twenty castrati have sung a hymn with quavering voices, all is ours; those who composed the congregation go in the evening to drink chocolate at the opera of St. Ambrose, and nobody takes umbrage at this. Churchmen take care not to excommunicate la Sig-

nora Cuzzoni, la Signora Faustina, la Signora Barbarini, and above all Signor Farinelli, knight of Calatrava, and actor of the opera, who is possessed of diamonds as big as my thumb.

"In that country persons in power never persecute; this is the reason why a king who is never opposed always proves a good king, if he does not want common sense. All the mischief is done by low wretches who endeavor to domineer. These alone persecute with a view of acquiring importance. The pope is so powerful in Italy that he has no occasion to excommunicate persons of worth, possessed of talents which challenge esteem; but there are creatures in Paris with flat hair and mean understandings, who find it necessary to make themselves considerable by such means. If they do not form cabals, if they do not preach up rigid tenets, if they do not declaim against the elegant arts, they are overlooked in the crowd. Passengers take no notice of dogs except when they bark, and it is the desire of all to be taken notice of. The jealousy and rivalry of professions have great influence over this world. I have divulged our secret; don't reveal what I have said, and do me the favor to procure me a box in the lettice at the first tragedy of M. Collardeau."

"That you shall have," said the intendant des menus; "but make a complete discovery of your mysteries. Why is there not one of those with whom I have conversed upon this subject, who will agree with me that the excommunication of a society paid by the king is the highest insolence and absurd-

ity? And at the same time why does nobody make an effort to put an end to this scandalous abuse?"

"I think I have already answered you," said Brizel, "by owning, that we swarm with contradictions. France, to speak seriously, is the region of wit and folly, of industry and sloth, of philosophy and fanaticism, of gayety and pedantry, of laws and abuses, of just taste and impertinence. The ridiculous contrast between the renown of the tragedy of *'Cinna,'* and the infamy of those that represent it; the right possessed by the bishops of having a box to themselves at the representation of *'Cinna,'* and their right of anathematizing the actors, the author and the spectators, must be allowed to form an inconsistency worthy of the folly of this people; but produce me an instance of one human establishment that is not contradictory.

"Tell me why, since the apostles were all circumcised, and the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem circumcised, you are not also circumcised? Why can you with impunity eat puddings, though the prohibition to eat them was never cancelled? Why should the successors of the apostles who earned their bread by their labor, wallow in riches and honors? Why, though St. Joseph was a carpenter, and though his divine son stooped to learn that trade, has his vicar driven out the emperors, and without ceremony taken their place? Why have those who asserted that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, been excommunicated and anathematized during a succession of ages? And why are those now damned who think

the contrary? Why is a second marriage expressly forbidden in the Gospel to those whose first marriage has been annulled, and why do we permit second marriages in this case? Tell me, how comes it to pass, that the same marriage that is declared null and void at Paris, is still in force at Avignon?

"To turn our conversation to the theatre, of which you are so fond, explain to me the reason why you applaud the brutal and factious insolence of Joad, who causes Athalie to be beheaded because she was desirous of having her grandson Joas educated at her own court, at the same time that if a priest among us was to make any such attempt upon those of the royal family, there is not a soul that would not condemn the delinquent to capital punishment?

"Custom regulates all things; dancing, for example, has been, in almost all nations, a religious ceremony; the very Jews danced through devotion. If the archbishop of Paris was to take it into his head to dance a minuet at high mass, people would laugh at it as much as at his certificates of confession; sacramental acts are still represented at Madrid upon holy days. A comedian plays Jesus Christ; another plays Satan; an actress represents the Holy Virgin; another, Mary Magdalen at her toilet; Harlequin repeats the Ave Maria; Judas says his paternoster.

"During these representations, they sometimes, with great ceremony, burn the descendants of our good father Abraham; and while the poor wretches roast, they gravely sing to them pious ballads, com-

posed by one of their kings, and translated into bad Latin. Notwithstanding all this, there is as much good sense, politeness, and wit at Madrid as at any court in Europe.

"Horses at Rome receive a benediction; were we to cause our stables at St. Genevieve to be blessed, half Paris would exclaim against the scandal."

OBSERVATIONS ON HISTORY.

WILL public authors never cease to give us false conceptions of the past, the present, and the future? In their opinion, surely, mankind must have been born to be deceived; with so much confidence do they pretend, even in this enlightened age, to obtrude upon us the fables of Herodotus; nay, and fables which even Herodotus himself would not have dared to impose upon the Greeks.

How much wiser are we for being so frequently told that Menes was the grandson of Noah? and with what appearance of justice can we affect to ridicule the genealogies of Moréri, while we ourselves compose others no less ridiculous? Noah, it is affirmed, sent his children to travel into foreign parts; his grandson, Menes, into Egypt; his other grandson into China; I know not what other grandson into Sweden; and a younger descendant still into Spain. Travelling, in those days, must have improved the minds of young gentlemen much more than it does at present. The moderns, in the course of ten or twelve centuries, have hardly been able to acquire an imperfect knowledge in geometry; but these ancient travellers had no sooner arrived in those uncultivated countries, than they began to foretell eclipses. Certain it is that the authentic history of China contains calculations of eclipses for about four thousand years. Confucius mentions thirty-six computations of the same nature, all of which, except four, the mathematical missionaries

have found to be just. But these facts do not puzzle the writers who have been pleased to make Noah the grandfather of Fo-hi; because they are resolved that nothing shall puzzle them.

Other admirers of antiquity would make us believe that the Egyptians were the wisest people in the universe; because, forsooth, they paid an extreme deference to their priests; and yet it is well known that the wise priests and legislators of these wise people worshipped monkeys, cats, and onions. We may extol the works of the ancient Egyptians as much as ever we please; such of them, however, as still remain, are at best but shapeless blocks, the finest of their statues not being comparable to the most indifferent of our ordinary artists. The Egyptians must certainly have learned the art of sculpture from the Greeks, there never having been a masterly performance produced in Egypt that did not proceed from the hand of a Greek. The Egyptians, it is said, were profoundly skilled in astronomy: the four sides of a great pyramid are opposed to the four quarters of the world; is not that a convincing proof of the truth of the assertion? But were the Egyptians equal to our Cassinis, our Halleys, our Keplers, or Tycho Brahes? These good people told Herodotus, with great gravity, that in eleven thousand years, the sun had set twice in the same place as it rose. Such was their astronomy!

It cost, according to M. Rollin, fifty thousand crowns to open and shut the sluices of Lake Mœris. This author is very dear with his sluices; and, besides, his calculations are false. There is no sluice

— unless it be a very bad one indeed — that may not be opened and shut for a crown: but it cost, he says, fifty talents to open and shut these sluices. It must be observed, that in the time of Colbert, a talent was equal to three thousand French livres. Rollin, however, is not aware, that since that period, the current value of our specie is nearly doubled; and that therefore, the expense of opening the sluices of Lake Mœris must have been, according to his computation, about three hundred thousand livres, which is almost two hundred and ninety-seven thousand livres more than enough. All the other calculations in his thirteen volumes seem to be equally inaccurate. The same author affirms, after Herodotus, that in Egypt, a country not nearly so extensive as France, there was a standing army of four hundred thousand men, every one of whom had a daily allowance of five pounds of bread, and two pounds of flesh. This last article makes eight hundred thousand pounds of flesh a day for the soldiers alone, in a country where they hardly eat any flesh at all. Besides, to whom belonged these four hundred thousand soldiers, while Egypt was divided into several petty principalities? But this is not all; we are further told, that every soldier had six acres of land free from taxes. Two millions four hundred thousand acres of ground that paid nothing to the state! and yet this poor and petty state maintained a greater army than is nowadays maintained by the grand seignior, who is master of Egypt, and other territories ten times more extensive than it. Louis XIV., it is true, had four hundred thousand

men in arms for some years; but that was an extraordinary and unnatural effort, and that effort ruined France.

Would people but take the pains to consult their reason, instead of their memory, and to examine rather than transcribe, we should not see books and errors multiplied without end: nothing would then be committed to writing that had not the recommendation at once of novelty and of truth. The qualification in which historians are commonly defective is a true philosophical spirit; most of them, instead of discussing matters of fact with men, content themselves with telling tales to children. Should the fable of Smerdis's ears, or that of Darius, who gained a kingdom by the neighing of his horse, or that of Sennacherib, whose army was miraculously destroyed by rats; should such fables as these, I say, be reprinted in the present age? If men will still repeat such improbable stories, let them at least represent them as no better than they really are.

Is it allowable for a man of sense, born in the eighteenth century, to entertain us with a serious discourse concerning the oracles of Delphos; one while to tell us that this oracle prophesied that Crœsus would boil a sheep and a tortoise in a tortoise shell; at another, to inform us that battles were won agreeable to the prediction of Apollo, and to assign as the cause of these events the great power of the devil? M. Rollin, in his "Ancient History," undertakes the defence of oracles against Van Dale, Fontenelle, and Basnage. "With regard to M.

Fontenelle," says he, "his book against oracles, drawn from Van Dale, is to be considered merely as a youthful performance." This decree, I am afraid, of Rollin's old age against Fontenelle's youth, will be reversed at the bar of reason, where it seldom happens that rhetoricians gain their cause, when they enter the lists with philosophers. To be convinced of this, we need only attend to what Rollin has said in his tenth volume, where he means to speak of physics. He there alleges that Archimedes, in order to demonstrate the surprising effects of the mechanical powers, to his good friend, the king of Syracuse, ordered a galley, doubly loaded, to be placed on the solid earth, and then pushed it gently into the stream with one finger, without so much as coming out of his chariot. This, it is plain, is the language of a rhetorician; had he had the least smattering of philosophy, he would at once have perceived the absurdity of what he asserts.

If we would improve the present time to the best advantage, we should not squander away our lives in brooding over ancient fables. I would advise a young man to acquire a slight knowledge of these remote ages; but I would have him begin the serious study of history at that period where it becomes truly interesting to us, which, in my opinion, is toward the end of the fifteenth century. From that era history is rendered more authentic, chiefly by means of the art of printing, which was then unknown. The general face of Europe was known; the Turks, who overspread it, banished polite literature from Constantinople, but it flourished in Italy;

it was established in France, and it went to polish the rude manners of the Germans, the English, and other northern nations. A new religion delivered one-half of Europe from papal subjection. A new system of politics took place; by the help of the mariner's compass, the Cape of Good Hope was doubled, and the trade between Europe and China was rendered more easy than that between Paris and Madrid. America was discovered; a new world was conquered, and our own was almost totally changed: the Christian nations of Europe became a kind of immense republic, in which the balance of power was established on a more sure and solid foundation than it had ever been in ancient Greece. A perpetual intercourse unites all the parts of this vast body together, in spite of the wars excited by the ambition of kings, and even in spite of religious wars, which are still more destructive. The arts, which are the glory of every nation, were carried to a degree of perfection which they never attained in Greece and Rome. This is the history which every man should know: in this you will find no chimerical predictions, no lying oracles, no false miracles, no stupid fables; in this everything is true, almost to the most minute circumstances, about which, however, none but little souls will give themselves great concern. To us everything relates, everything contributes, to our advantage. The plate from which we eat, our furniture, our wants, our new pleasures all conspire to remind us that America, the East Indies, and, as a consequence, the whole world, has, within these two centuries and a half,

been reunited by the industry of our forefathers. We cannot take a single step that does not recall to our memory the great change which has lately been brought about in the world. Here are a hundred cities which were formerly subject to the pope, but which are now free. There have been established, at least for a time, the privileges of the Germanic body: here is formed the most perfect republic in a country, which is every moment in danger of being swallowed up by the sea; England has united true liberty with royalty: Sweden copies the glorious example; but her sister, Denmark, has not the prudence to follow the same course. If I travel into Germany, France, or Spain, I everywhere find traces of that inveterate quarrel, which has subsisted so long between the houses of Austria and Bourbon; houses united by so many treaties, all which have been productive of the most cruel and bloody wars. There is not a single man in Europe, whose fortune has not, in some measure, been influenced by those great revolutions. And does it become us after this to trifle away our time with Shalmaneser, and Mardokempad, and with curious but useless inquiries concerning the anecdotes of Cayamarrat the Persian, and of Sabaco Metophis. No man, surely, when arrived at the age of maturity, and engaged in the management of weighty and important affairs, will sit down to relate the tales of his nurse.

NEW REFLECTIONS ON HISTORY.

I doubt not that the same change which has lately happened in physics may soon take place in the

manner of writing history. New discoveries have banished the old systems. One would wish, too, to study the characters of mankind with all that interesting particularity of circumstance, which now constitutes the foundation of natural philosophy.

We now begin to give little credit to the adventure of Curtius, who shut up a gulf, by throwing himself and his horse into the opening; the shields which came down from heaven, and all the pretty talismans which the gods were wont, with so much liberality, to present to mankind; the Vestals, who set a ship afloat by the charm of their girdle: in a word, the whole group of those famous fooleries, with which ancient histories are stuffed, are now the objects of ridicule and derision. In the same light we consider what M. Rollin has related, with so much gravity, in his ancient history, of King Nabis, who complimented all those who gave him money, with the enjoyment of his wife, and placed such as refused to contribute, in the arms of a handsome doll, resembling the queen exactly in outward appearance, but armed, under her petticoats, with sharp iron points. Who, when he hears so many authors repeating, one after another, that the famous Otho, archbishop of Mentz, was besieged and devoured by an army of rats, in 698; that Gascony was deluged with showers of blood in 1017; and that two armies of serpents fought a battle near Tournay, in 1059: who, I say, on hearing such improbable stories as these, can refrain from laughing? Prodigies, predictions, and fiery trials are now held in the same

degree of credit and estimation as the fables of Herodotus.

I next mean to treat of modern history; in which you will find no dolls embracing courtiers, no bishops devoured by rats.

Some people take great pains — and not without reason — to mark the precise day on which a battle was fought. They relate every article of a treaty; they describe the pomp and solemnity of a coronation, the ceremony of receiving a cap, and even the entry of an ambassador, without forgetting either his Swiss or lackeys. It is very proper that public records should be kept of everything, that so we may be able to consult them on occasion; and indeed I consider all our large books at present as so many dictionaries. But after having read the descriptions of three or four thousand battles, and the substance of some hundreds of treaties, I do not find myself one jot wiser than when I began; because from them I learn nothing but events. The battle of Charles Martel gives me no more insight into the characters of the French and Saracens than does the victory which Tamerlane gained over Bajazet into those of the Turks and Tartars. I own indeed, that when I read the memoirs of Cardinal de Retz, and of Madame de Motteville, I know every word of what the queen-mother said to M. de Jersay; I see how the coadjutor assisted in raising and strengthening the barricades; and I could almost make an abstract of the long conversations which he had with Madame de Bouillon. This serves very well to gratify my curiosity; but contributes little

to my instruction. There are some books that contain the true or false anecdotes of a court. Whoever has seen courts, or is desirous of seeing them, is as fond of these illustrious trifles, as a country lady is of hearing the news of the paltry village from which she came.

At bottom both are guided by the same principle; and the motive that actuates the one is as noble as that which influences the other. Under the reign of Henry IV. the anecdotes of Charles IX. were the subject of conversation; and during the first years of Louis XIV. the duke de Bellegarde was the favorite topic of discourse. All these trifles are preserved for an age or two, and then sink into eternal oblivion.

But the misfortune is, that in order to attain this superficial kind of knowledge, we neglect studies infinitely more useful and important. I want to know what was the strength of a nation before a war, and whether that war contributed to increase or diminish its strength. Was Spain richer before the conquest of the new world than it is at present? How much more populous was it in the time of Charles V. than in that of Philip IV.? Why was it that Amsterdam, about two centuries ago, hardly contained twenty thousand souls? Why, at present, does it contain two hundred and forty thousand, and what is the most accurate method of determining the difference? How much more populous is England now than it was under Henry VIII.? Is it true — as is alleged in the "Persian Letters" — that the earth wants inhabitants; and that it is depopu-

lated in comparison to what it was some two thousand years ago? Rome, it is true, contained at that time many more citizens than it does at present. I acknowledge, too, that Alexandria and Carthage were great cities; but Paris, London, Constantinople, Grand Cairo, Amsterdam, and Hamburg were not then in being. There were three hundred nations in ancient Gaul; but these three hundred nations were not equal to ours, either in number of men, or in the knowledge and practice of the arts of peace. Germany was formerly a forest, now it is covered with a hundred opulent cities. One would be almost tempted to think that the spirit of invective, wearied with persecuting individuals, had attacked the whole of humankind. The constant and general complaint is that the world daily becomes at once more vicious and less populous. Have we any reason to regret our not having lived in those times, when there was no highway from Bordeaux to Orleans, and when Paris was a small village, the inhabitants of which were perpetually cutting one another's throats? People may say what they will, but Europe certainly contains more men than it did formerly, and these men are more active and industrious. One may easily know how much Europe has increased in population during the course of any number of years; for in almost all your great cities, a list of the births is published at the end of the year; and according to the sure and accurate method lately laid down by a Dutch gentleman, equally ingenious and indefatigable, one may calculate the number of people from that of the births.

This then will be a principal object of attention to everyone that would read history like a citizen and philosopher. But he will take care not to confine his attention to this particular alone; he will inquire what has been the prevailing virtue and vice of a nation; why it has been powerful or weak at sea; and how and in what degree it has been enriched during the course of a century; these last two articles may be fully ascertained from the list of exportations. He will endeavor to learn how the arts and manufactures have been established, and will trace them through all their windings and turnings, in their progress from one country to another. In a word, the revolutions in the manners of the people and in the laws of the land will be the great object of his most serious study and attention. Thus, instead of obtaining a partial knowledge of the history of kings and courts, he will acquire a thorough insight into the characters of mankind.

In vain do I read the annals of France; all our historians are silent with regard to these interesting particulars. None of them have chosen for their motto, *"Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto."* We should then, in my opinion, artfully interweave these useful inquiries with the general texture of events. This appears to me to be the only method of writing modern history like a true politician and a true philosopher. To write ancient history is, in effect, to mix a few truths with a thousand falsehoods. Perhaps the use of this history is much the same as that of ancient fables; the great events

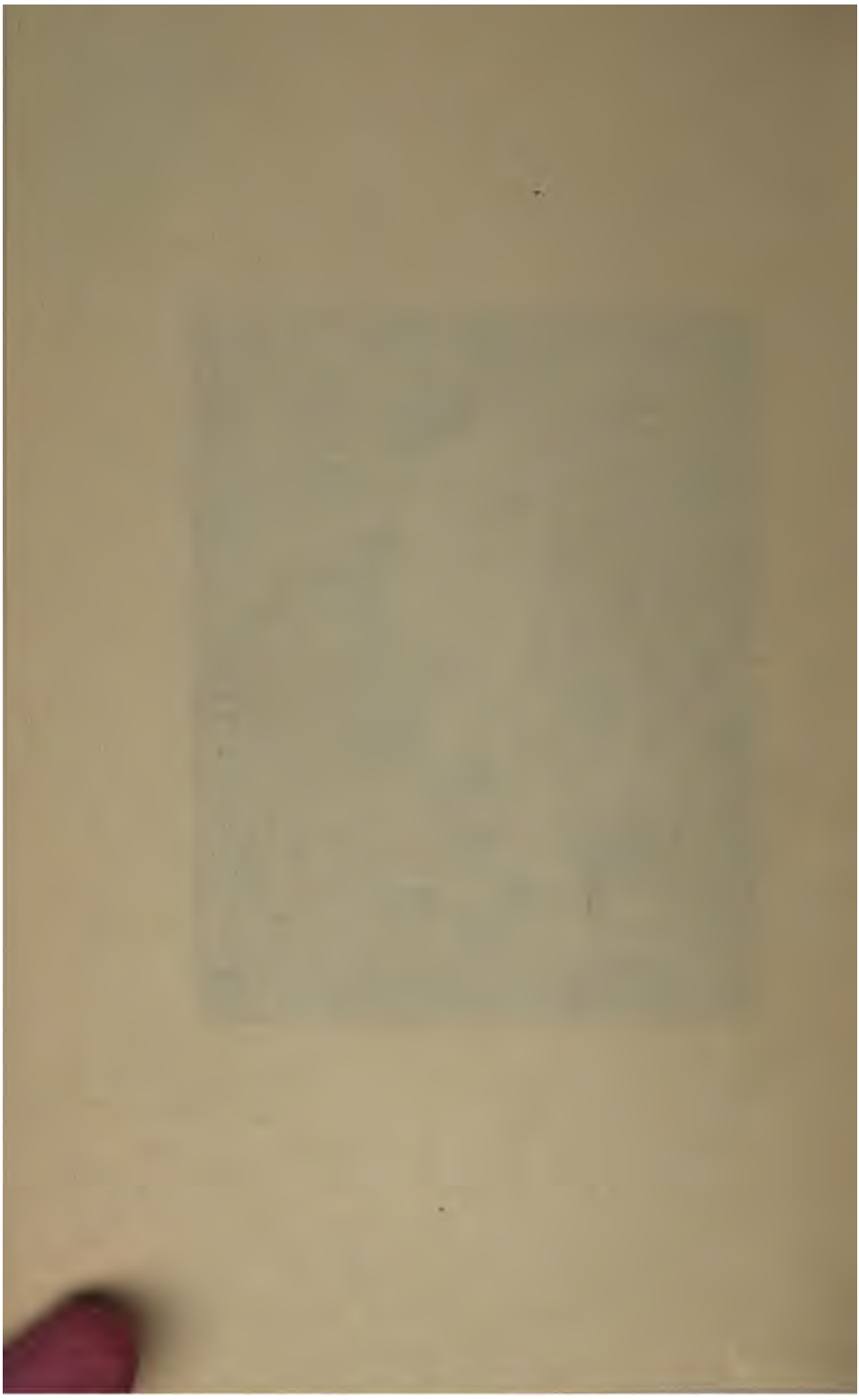
which it contains are the constant subjects of our paintings, our poems, our conversation; and from them, too, we derive the grand outlines of morality. We should read the adventures of Alexander, as we do the labors of Hercules. In fine, ancient history seems to have the same relation to modern that old medals have to the current coin; the former are deposited in the cabinets of the curious, the latter circulates through the world for the use and convenience of mankind.

But to undertake and execute such a work, the author must be possessed of several kinds of knowledge besides that of books; he must be encouraged by the government, as much, at least, for what he may perform, as were the Boileaus, the Racines, and the Valincourts, for what they never performed; so that what a witty clerk of the treasury said to these gentlemen may never be applicable to him: "We never saw anything belonging to them but their seals."

THE SCEPTICISM OF HISTORY.

Incredulity, let us remember, according to Aristotle, is the foundation of all knowledge. This maxim should be attended to by all those who read history, and especially ancient history. What an infinite number of absurd facts! what a confused heap of incoherent fables that shock the common sense of mankind! Of these do not believe a single syllable. There were kings, consuls, and decemvirs in Rome; the Romans destroyed Carthage; Cæsar vanquished Pompey; all this is true. But when

BARON LEIBNITZ



Do not believe a word of this story which Plutarch tells you. Rather believe Cæsar himself, who does not speak a word of it in his "Commentaries"; and be assured that when a man throws himself into the sea with some papers in his hand, he must necessarily wet them.

You will find in Quintus Curtius, that Alexander and his generals were surprised when they beheld the ebbing and flowing of the sea, a thing which to them was equally new and unexpected; do not believe a word of it.

It is probable enough that Alexander killed Clitus in a fit of drunkenness, and that he loved Hephæstion as Socrates loved Alcibiades; but it is extremely improbable that the disciples of Aristotle should be ignorant of the ebbing and flowing of the sea. There were philosophers in his army; it was sufficient to have been on the Euphrates, at the mouth of which there were tides, in order to be acquainted with this phenomenon. Alexander had travelled into Africa, the coasts of which are washed by the ocean. Is it possible that his admiral, Nearchus, could be ignorant of that which was known to every boy on the banks of the river Indus? Such stupid improbabilities, repeated by so many authors, have too much discredited the veracity of historians.

Father Maimbourg relates, after a hundred others, that two Jews promised the empire to Leo the Isaurian, provided that when he should be emperor, he would destroy images. What interest, pray, had these two Jews in hindering the Christians from having paintings? How could these two wretched

creatures promise the empire? Is it not offering an insult to the understanding of the reader, to entertain him with such fables as these?

It must be confessed, that Mézeray, in his stiff, low, and unequal style, intermixes with the ill-digested facts which he relates, many absurdities of the same nature. At one time it is Henry V. of England, who was crowned king of France at Paris, who died of the hemorrhoids for having presumed, says he, to seat himself on the throne of our kings; at another, it is St. Michael who appeared to Joan of Arc.

I do not believe even eye-witnesses, when they report things inconsistent with common sense. Sieur de Joinville, or rather he who has translated his Gallic history into ancient French, may assure me, if he will, that the emirs of Egypt, after having assassinated their sultan, offered the crown to St. Louis, their prisoner; they might as well tell me that we had offered the crown of France to a Turk. What likelihood is there that the Mahometans should ever think of choosing for their sovereign a man whom they could regard in no other light than as a leader of barbarians, whom they had taken in battle, who neither understood their laws nor their language, and who was the capital enemy of their religion?

I give no more credit to Sieur de Joinville, when he tells me this tale, than when he informs me that the Nile overflowed at St. Remy, in the beginning of October. I will likewise venture to call in question the story of the old man of the mountain, who,

upon report of a crusade undertaken by St. Louis, despatched two assassins to kill him at Paris; and, upon a fresh report of his extraordinary virtue, sent off next day two couriers to countermand his first orders. This account has too much the air of an Arabian fable.

I will boldly tell Mézeray, Father Daniel, and all the historians, that I do not believe a storm of rain and hail made Edward III. return to his right senses, and procured peace to Philip of Valois. Conquerors are not so devout, nor do they make peace on account of rain.[1]

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[1] The greatest minds are often actuated by the most capricious motives. If we suppose that the soul of Edward III. was influenced either by the terrors of superstition or the sentiments of humanity, we shall see no reason to withhold our credit from this incident, which is recorded by all the historians. In the year 1360, Edward having invaded France, and filled that country with horror and devastation, while he was advancing at the head of his army, within two leagues of Chartres, was overtaken by a terrible tempest, which he considered as a dreadful visitation from heaven. The peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, intermingled with deluges of rain, smote the hearts of his best warriors with dismay: but what made the strongest impression upon Edward's own mind was the havoc occasioned by a terrible shower of hail, which in a moment laid a thousand of his best troops, and six times that number of horses, dead upon the spot. Deeply affected by the scene, he threw himself from his horse upon the ground, and stretching his hands toward the church at Chartres, solemnly vowed to God that he would seriously incline his mind to peace, if it could be obtained on equitable terms. Now we should be glad to know what circumstance of this transaction is incredible, or even

Nothing, to be sure, is more probable than crimes; yet they should at least be well attested. Mézeray makes mention of more than sixty princes who have been poisoned; but this he affirms without any proof; and a common report should be given as no better than a common report.

I will not even believe Titus Livius, when he tells me that the physician of Pyrrhus offered to poison his master, provided the Romans would pay him a certain sum of money. At that time the Romans had hardly any money at all; and Pyrrhus had wherewithal to purchase the republic, had it been exposed for sale. The place of first physician to Pyrrhus was probably more lucrative than that of consul. I will not believe such a story as this, until I find it indisputably proved that a first physician of one of our kings engaged to poison his patient, upon receiving a reward from a Swiss canton.

Let us likewise suspect whatever appears to be exaggerated. An innumerable army of Persians checked, at the Straits of Thermopylæ, by three hundred Spartans, does not stagger my faith; the situation of the ground renders the adventure probable. Charles XII., with eight thousand hardy

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improbable? We would ask M. de Voltaire whether he would not have had much more reason to doubt the abdication of Charles V., if the truth of the fact was to be determined by its credibility. We may once for all observe that nothing can be more absurd than the attempt to deduce from general canons the motives of particular actions, which depend upon such a variety of weakness, peculiarity, and caprice.

veterans, defeated at Narva about eighty thousand half armed Russians; I admire, I believe the action. But when I read, that Simon de Montfort, with nine hundred soldiers, divided into three bodies, beat a hundred thousand men, I then repeat: "I do not believe a word of it." I am told indeed that it was a miracle; but is it so very certain that God performed a miracle in favor of Simon de Montfort?[1]

I would call in question the battle of Charles XII. at Bendar, were it not sufficiently attested by many eye-witnesses, and did not the character of that prince render such a romantic instance of heroism extremely probable. That skepticism which we should entertain with regard to particular facts, we should likewise extend to the manners of foreign nations; let us refuse our belief to every historian, ancient and modern, who relates things contrary to nature, and to the general character of the human kind.

All the first accounts of America talk of nothing but anthropophagi, or man-eaters; and to read them, one would imagine that the Americans eat human flesh as commonly as we eat mutton. The truth, when fully known, amounts only to this,

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[1] Such exploits as these were often achieved by Europeans, both in the East and West Indies: nor are they at all surprising, if we consider that the few were trained up to arms and discipline, and their antagonists a rude multitude without order and regulation, unarmed, unsupplied with necessaries, unprovided with subordinate command, rash, obstinate, fanatic, and encumbered even by the greatness of their own number.

that a small number of persons were eaten by their conquerors, instead of being eaten by the worms.[1]

The new Puffendorf, as incorrect as the old one, says that in 1589, an Englishman and four women, having escaped from a shipwreck which they had suffered in a voyage to Madagascar, landed on a desert island; and that the Englishman labored with so much success, that in 1667, there were found on this island, which was called Pines, no less than twelve thousand handsome English Protestants.

The ancients, and their numerous credulous compilers among the moderns, are perpetually telling us, that at Babylon, the best regulated city in the universe, all the maids and married women prostituted themselves once a year in the temple of Venus. I can easily believe, that in Babylon, as in other places, a man might have a little pleasure for his money; but I can never allow myself to think that in a city, the best governed of any that were then in the world, all the fathers and husbands sent their daughters and wives to a market of public prostitution, and that this decent traffic[2] was carried on by

[1] If we may believe the most creditable historians who have written of America and Africa, the Caribbee Indians feasted on human flesh, and were even so dainty in this particular that the prisoners destined for the market were fattened and even castrated, to render them the more plump and delicious. All the caciques in South America, and Montezuma in particular, had dishes of human flesh served every day at their tables; and in the kingdom of Congo in Africa, human flesh used to be sold publicly in shambles.

[2] Is there anything more surprising in this circumstance than in the practice of the Romans (another polite people),

the express orders of the legislature. We every day see published a hundred stupid stories of the same kind, concerning the customs of the Orientals; and where we have one traveller like Chardin, we have many thousands like Paul Lucas.

Such, however, is not the history of Charles XII. On the contrary, I can assure the reader that if ever history deserved credit, this, in a particular manner, is entitled to that distinction. I composed it, as is well known, from the memoirs of M. Fabricius, of Messieurs de Villelongue, and de Fierville, and from the accounts of several eye-witnesses. But as these witnesses did not see everything, and sometimes saw things in a false light, I have been led, by their means, into more than one error; not indeed concerning the essential facts, but only with regard to some private anecdotes, which, however indifferent in themselves, serve as matter of triumph to the little critics.

I afterward corrected this history by the military journal of M. Adlerfeld, which is very accurate, and which assisted me greatly in rectifying some facts and dates.

I likewise perused the history written by M. Norberg, chaplain and confessor of Charles XII. This is a work very ill digested, and very badly written; it is crowded with a variety of trifling inci-

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who lent their wives to one another occasionally? Is this prostitution more repugnant to the laws of decorum than were the mysteries of the *Bona Dea*, or the orgies of the Bacchanalians among the Greeks, who were undoubtedly the most civilized nation in the known world?

dents foreign to the subject; and even the grand events are rendered trifling, by the insipid manner of relating them. It is a collection of such rescripts, declarations, and manifestoes, as are usually published in the name of kings, when they are at war. These neither serve to point out the causes of events, nor to give us more distinct ideas of military and political transactions; and besides, they are intolerably irksome to the reader. A writer can, at best, but consult them occasionally, in order to derive from them a little information; in the same manner as an architect makes use of rubbish in raising an edifice.

Among the public pieces, with which Norberg has interlarded his wretched history, there are some which are even false and absurd; such as the letter of Achmet, the Turkish emperor, whom this historian calls sultan pasha by the grace of God.

This same Norberg makes the king of Sweden say what that monarch never said, nor ever could say, in the affair of Stanislaus. He pretends that Charles XII. told the primate, by way of answer to his objections, that Stanislaus had gained a great many friends in his journey to Italy. Certain, however, it is, that Stanislaus never was in Italy, as that monarch himself has assured me. After all, what matters it whether a Pole, in the sixteenth century, travelled into Italy or not for his amusement? What an infinite number of useless facts ought to be retrenched from history, and how do I felicitate myself in having abridged the "History of Charles XII."

Norberg had neither judgment nor genius, nor a sufficient knowledge of the world; and it was for that reason, perhaps, that Charles XII. thought proper to choose him for his confessor. Whether he made that prince a good Christian or not, I will not take upon me to determine, but most undoubtedly he has not made him a hero; and the memory of Charles XII. would be buried in oblivion, were it not transmitted to posterity by abler historians than M. Norberg.

It may not here be improper to inform the reader that there appeared, some years ago, a small pamphlet, entitled "Historical and Critical Remarks on the History of Charles XII.," by M. de Voltaire. This little performance was composed from some anecdotes of Count Poniatowski. These contained his answers to some fresh questions which I had proposed to him on his last journey to Paris. But his secretary having taken a double copy of them, they fell into the hands of a Dutch bookseller, who did not fail to publish them; and the corrector of the press gave them the title of "Critical," in order to procure them a better sale. This is one of those petty larcenies, which are sometimes practised in the bookselling trade.

La Motraye, a domestic of M. Fabricius, has likewise published some remarks on this history. Among the errors and trifles with which this critique of la Motraye is filled, there are some things that are true and useful, and of these I have taken care to avail myself in the latter editions of my history, especially in that of 1739. A historian should neg-

lect nothing: he should, if possible, consult both kings and valets de chambre.

A LETTER FROM VOLTAIRE TO A PROFESSOR OF HISTORY.

SIR: You must have perceived that the pretended "Universal History" printed at The Hague, and said to be carried down to Charles V. though it contains less than the title promises, by more than a whole century, was not originally intended to see the light. It is no other than a crude collection made in the course of old studies, in which I was engaged, about fifteen years ago, with a person of a most respectable character, far transcending her sex and the age in which she lived, whose understanding comprehended all sorts of erudition, and was reinforced by judicious taste, without which that erudition would have been insipid, and scarcely entitled to the name of merit.

I prepared that groundwork solely for her use and my own, as may be plainly seen by considering the beginning; it is an account which I freely recall of what I had been reading; the best method of learning and acquiring distinct ideas: for a bare reading alone leaves little more than a confused picture in the memory.

My principal aim was to trace the revolutions of the human understanding in those of governments.

I endeavored to discover in what manner so many bad men, conducted by worse princes, have notwithstanding, in the long run, established societies, in

which the arts and sciences, and even the virtues, have been cultivated.

I attempted to find the paths of commerce, that privately repairs the ruins which savage conquerors leave behind them; and I studied to know, from the price of provisions, the riches or poverty of a people: above all things, I examined in what manner the arts revived and supported themselves in the midst of such desolation.

The character of nations is strongly marked by poetry and eloquence. I translated passages from some of the ancient oriental poets; and still remember one from the Persian Sadi, upon the power of the Supreme Being, in which we see the same genius that inspired the Arabian, Hebrew, and all oriental writers; that is, more imagination than propriety; more of the fustian than the sublime: their diction is figurative, but their figures are often very ill arranged; their outbursts of imagination are hitherto vague and superficial; and they are utterly ignorant of the art of transition. This is the passage from Sadi in blank verse:

He knows distinctly that which never was;
His ear is filled with what was never heard;
A monarch he, that needs no kneeling slave;
A judge, that executes no written law;
With his omniscience, like a graver's tool,
He traced our features in each mother's womb:
From morn to eve he leads the sun along,
With rubies sows the mountain's mighty mass:
He takes two drops of water; one starts up
A perfect man, the other shines a pearl.
He spoke the word and Being sprung from naught·
His word the universe will quickly melt

Into the immensity of space and void:
His word will raise the universe again,
From depths of nothing to the plains of Being.

Sadi was a native of Bactriana, and contemporary with Dante, who was born in Florence in 1265, and whose verses did honor to Italy, even when there was not one good prose author among all our modern nations. This genius happened to rise at a time when the quarrels between the Empire and the Church had left rankling wounds in different states, as well as in the minds of men. He was a Ghibelline, consequently persecuted by the Guelphs; therefore we must not be surprised to find him venting his chagrin in his poem to this effect:

Two suns of old, in one united blaze,
Diffused their genial warmth and cheering rays,
That banished darkness, and displayed the road
Which leads bewildered man to truth and God.
The imperial eagle's rights were plainly shown,
And the lamb's separate privileges known:
But now no more that light congenial shines;
One, dimmed with vapors, from his orb declines;
With dusky flame and heat unhallowed teems,
Ambitious to eclipse the other's beams;
War, blood, contention, and confusion reign;
The lamb now roars, a lion on the plain,
Proud in his purple robes usurped appears,
And with the shepherd's crook the sovereign's sceptre wears.

I translated above twenty pretty long passages from Dante, Petrarch, and Ariosto; and with a view to compare the genius of a nation with that of her imitators, I culled some parallel verses from Spenser, of which I endeavored to preserve the sense

and spirit with the utmost exactness. Thus I pursued the arts in their career.

Without engaging in the vast labyrinth of philosophical absurdities, which have been so long honored wth the name of science, I only took notice of the most palpable errors which had been mistaken for the most incontestable truths; and confining myself entirely to the useful arts, I still kept in view the history of all the discoveries which have been made from Geber the Arabian, who invented algebra, to the very last miracles of our own time.

This part of the history was doubtless the favorite of my attention, and the revolutions of states were no more than accessory to those of the arts and sciences. This whole work, which had cost me so much trouble, having been stolen from me some years ago, I was the more chagrined, as I found myself absolutely incapable of beginning again such a tedious and toilsome task.

That part which was purely historical, remained in my hands an undigested mass; it is brought down to the reign of Philip II. and ought to be continued to the age of Louis XIV.

This series of history, disencumbered of all the details which commonly obscure the plan, as well as of all those minute circumstances of war, so interesting at the time, but so tedious afterward, together with the smaller occurrences which never fail to injure the great events, should compose a vast picture, which, by striking the imagination, might assist the memory.

Several persons expressed a desire of having the

manuscript, imperfect as it was; and indeed there are above thirty copies of it, which I gave the more willingly, because, finding myself unable to work longer on the subject, I considered them as so many materials put into the hands of those who might finish the performance.

When M. de la Bruyère had the privilege of the "French Mercury" about 1747, he begged of me some sheets which appeared in his journal, and were afterward collected in 1751; for they make collections of everything. What relates to the Crusades, which was but a part of the work, they inserted in this collection as a detached piece, and the whole was printed very incorrectly under the preposterous title of "A Plan of the History of the Human Understanding." This pretended plan of the history of the human understanding contains no more than some historical chapters relating to the ninth and tenth centuries.

A bookseller at The Hague having found a more complete manuscript, has printed it under the title of "An Abridgment of the Universal History, from the Time of Charles the Great, to the reign of Charles V.," although it goes not so far as Louis XI., king of France; probably he had no more copy, or was resolved to suspend the publication of his third volume, until the first two should be sold off.

He says he bought the manuscript of a man who lives at Brussels; and indeed I was informed that a domestic, belonging to his highness Prince Charles of Lorraine, had been long in possession of a copy which fell into his hands by a very remarkable

accident; for it was taken in a box among the equipage of a certain prince, which was pillaged by the hussars in a battle fought in Bohemia. This work being therefore got by the right of war, is a lawful prize: but one would imagine the same hussars had directed the printing; for it is strangely disfigured, and the most interesting chapters are totally wanting; almost all the dates are false, and the proper names for the most part disguised. There are many expressions which convey no idea, and a number that convey such as are either ridiculous or indecent. The transitions, the connections are misplaced. I am often made to say that which is quite contrary to what I have said; and I cannot conceive how anybody should read that work as it has been presented to the public. I am very glad that the bookseller has found his account in the sale of it; but, if he had consulted me on the subject, I would have enabled him to oblige the world with a work that would not have been so defective; and, seeing it was impossible to stop the impression, I would have taken all imaginable pains to arrange that unformed mass, which, in its present condition, does not deserve the notice of any sensible man.

As I did not believe that any bookseller would have run the risk of publishing such an imperfect work, I frankly own I have made use of some of the materials to build a more regular and solid edifice. One of the most respectable princesses of Germany, to whom I could refuse nothing, having done me the honor to desire I would write the "Annals of the Empire," I have not scrupled to insert a

small number of pages from that pretended "Universal History," in the work which she commanded me to compose.

While I was busied in giving her Serene Highness this proof of my obedience, and the "Annals of the Empire" were almost ready printed, I understood that a certain German, who was last year at Paris, had employed his talents on the same subject, and that his work was ready to appear. Had I known the circumstances sooner, I should certainly have put a stop to the impression of mine: for I know he is more equal to such an enterprise than I am, and I am very far from pretending to enter the lists with such a rival; but the bookseller to whom I have made a present of my manuscript, has taken too much pains in serving me, to be deprived of the fruits of his labor: besides, the taste and manner in which I have written these "Annals of the Empire," being altogether different from the method observed by that learned gentleman, whom I have had the honor to mention, perhaps the understanding reader may not be sorry to see the same truths displayed in different lights.

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